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RICHARD AND COSIMA WAGNER

*From H. S. Chamberlain, "Richard Wagner," published by
Messrs. Friedrich Bruckmann, Munich*

LETTERS OF RICHARD WAGNER

SELECTED AND EDITED

BY

WILHELM ALTMANN



TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY

M. M. BOZMAN

VOLUME TWO

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PART IV
FROM THE DEPARTURE FROM ZURICH
TO THE
RESCUE BY KING LUDWIG II. OF BAVARIA
1858-1864

LETTERS OF RICHARD WAGNER

PART IV

FROM THE DEPARTURE FROM ZURICH TO THE RESCUE BY KING LUDWIG II. OF BAVARIA

1858-1864

361. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, ZURICH

GENEVA, 19th August, 1858.

* * * O my God! had I only the power to let you see deep into my inmost heart—what I have suffered this year, and how I have striven for peace to do my life work. It has been in vain—nothing but storms and upheavals, passion and blind anger; all my laborious building for the sake of peace and quietness has fallen about my ears again and again. You, my dear child, make light of it. You reproach me and see only your own misfortunes. I am more just. I reproach no one—truly, not even you. A great deal was required of you—*too* much considering your terrible ill-health. So let us now part in peace, reconciled, each going his and her own way for a time in search of composure and renewed vitality. For me, at present, solitude and withdrawal from all company is a vital necessity. The society of those I love best, even those¹ whom we had staying with us lately, is nothing but torment to me.

My many wounds are bleeding, and of these heartfelt anxiety for you is not the least. Furthermore, I feel the urgent need to balance the accounts of a whole lifetime. I must clear my mind about much that has vehemently moved me of late, and above all I must consider how to find peace and quiet in the future to complete such works as I may still be destined to give to the world. The place where I thought last year to have found a refuge is now out of the question, for only the lapse of years could clear up and allay all difficulties. * * * *

And now, once more I ask you, shorten this black hour for

¹ Hans von Bülow and his wife and Klindworth. Cf. *My Life*, pp. 686-9.

yourself as far as you can. It is bitterest grief to think of you still in the rooms which eventually witnessed our many passionate disagreements and which I, therefore, was so glad to leave behind. Get away as soon as possible! * * * *

362. TO HIS SISTER, CLARA WOLFRAM, CHEMNITZ ¹

GENEVA, 20th August, 1858.

* * I promised to give you fuller details of my reasons for the decisive step which you see me taking now.

For the last six years the one thing which has supported me, comforted me and, above all, has given me strength to endure my life with Minna despite the tremendous differences of our characters and natures, has been the love of this young woman, who at first drew towards me slowly and hesitatingly, timidly, bashfully, but later with ever-increasing resolute trust. As there could never be any question of a union between us, our affection became coloured by that sadness, that melancholy, which keeps all that is common or base at a distance and seeks the source of joy solely in the well-being of its object. Since first we came to know each other, *she* has been tireless in her delicate care for me, and in the most courageous manner has got from her husband all that could serve to make my life easier. In view of his wife's candour the latter could not fail to grow increasingly jealous. Well, she had the greatness to keep her husband informed of the state of her heart. It is easy to imagine the sacrifices and conflicts this must have cost. * * * The most wonderful thing of all is that I actually had no inkling of the struggles she was undergoing for me. For his love of her, the husband was obliged to appear uniformly friendly and unconstrained with me. * * * This was the unexampled result of the glorious love of this purest and noblest of women; and this love, which throughout remained unexpressed between us, was bound at last to be revealed when a year ago I wrote the poem of my *Tristan* and gave it to her. Then, for the first time, her strength failed her and she told me she would die!

Think, dear sister, what this love must mean to me after a lifetime of troubles and sorrows, agitations and sacrifices such as mine!—Yet we recognised at once that our union was unthinkable; we renounced every selfish desire, we suffered, we endured, but—we loved each other!—

With shrewd feminine instinct my wife seemed to understand

¹ *Familienbriefe*, p. 217, with omissions. Complete in Golther's preface to *An Mathilde Wesendonck* (2nd edition, etc.).

what was going on. She often showed jealousy and assumed a derisive or disparaging attitude, but, nevertheless, put up with our intercourse, which, indeed, never offended against morality being content that each should know the other near. Accordingly I supposed that Minna was reasonable, and knew that she really had nothing to fear since no union between us could be contemplated, and that forbearance on her part was therefore the most honest and best course. Well, I was to learn that I was mistaken in this matter. Gossip began to come to my ears, and at last she forgot herself so far as to intercept a letter of mine—and open it. This letter, if only she had been in a state to understand it, might have given her full reassurance, for our resignation was its theme. But she noticed only the intimacies of expression and lost all balance. She came to me raging and thereby forced me to explain to her, calmly and clearly, how matters stood; that she had brought unhappiness on herself by opening such a letter; and that if she could not control herself we should have to part. On this point, on my part calmly, on hers passionately, we were at one. Still, next day I was sorry for her. I went to her and said, “Minna, you are very unwell.” We planned that she should take a cure; she seemed to become calmer and the day of her departure for the cure drew near. She was set on speaking to Frau Wesendonck before going. I definitely forbade it. It was of prime importance to me that I should acquaint Minna gradually with the character of my relation to this lady in order to convince her that she need not fear for the continuance of our married life and ought to behave sensibly and nobly, renouncing foolish ideas of revenge and avoiding scenes. At length she solemnly promised me to do this. But she could not let things rest. In spite of all, and behind my back, she went to the Wesendoncks’ and—probably without realising what she was doing—insulted the gentle lady most grossly. When she said to her, “If I were an ordinary woman I should go to your husband with this letter!” Frau Wesendonck, who was conscious of never having had a secret from her husband (a thing, of course, that a woman like Minna can never understand!), could not do otherwise than go straight to her husband to tell him about this scene and the cause of it. Thus the delicacy and purity of our relationship was roughly and basely assaulted and many changes were bound to follow. It took me a long time to explain to my friend that a nature like my wife’s could never be made to understand the loftiness and disinterestedness of the relations which existed between us two, and I was deeply and earnestly reproached for having neglected to do my part while she, for hers, had always confided in her husband.—Anyone capable of realising what I have

suffered since (this happened in the middle of April) will also understand my present feelings, forced as I am to recognise that my constant efforts to preserve our interrupted relations are utterly fruitless. For three months I have looked after Minna at her cure with the greatest care. Eventually, to pacify her, I broke off all intercourse with our neighbours for this period. My sole thought being for her health, I did everything possible to bring her to her senses and to a perception of what beseeemed herself and her age. All in vain! She persevered in the most trivial remonstrances, declared herself insulted and on each occasion was barely pacified when the old fury broke out anew. A month ago Minna returned, and we had visitors—a decision had to be made. It was impossible to have the two women near each other any longer; for Frau Wesendonck could not forget that, as a reward for her great sacrifices and delicate care for me, she had to endure, on my part, through my wife, rude insult. Moreover people were talking. Enough! The scenes of torment were endless, and finally, out of regard for each, I had to abandon the beautiful refuge prepared for me with such tender love.

What I need now is rest and absolute seclusion, for I have had to suffer much.—Minna is incapable of understanding what an unhappy marriage ours has always been; she imagines everything in the past as different from what it was and if *I* found comfort, distraction and forgetfulness in my art, *she* manages to believe that I never needed them. Enough! I have come to a decision. I cannot endure this everlasting wrangling and suspicion any longer if I am to have courage to fulfil my life's task. Anyone who had observed me closely must have marvelled continually at my patience, my kindness, nay, my weakness, and if superficial critics condemn me now, I care not. But Minna never had a better opportunity to show herself worthy of the dignity of being my wife than when I needed all that is highest and dearest to support me. It lay in her hand to show whether she truly loved me. But she has no conception even of such true love and rage blinds her utterly!—

Nevertheless I make her illness her excuse—although even this illness might have taken on a different and milder character if she had been different, and gentler. The many hard strokes of fate which we encountered together and which *my* indwelling genius (which unfortunately I could not impart to *her*!) has carried me lightly through, dispose me to be considerate to her. I want to hurt her as little as possible for, after all, I am now and always very sorry for her! Only I feel incapable henceforward of enduring her company—nor can my company do her good. To her I shall

always be incomprehensible and a cause of suspicion. Therefore—we must be apart! But in kindness and love! I do not wish her disgrace. I wish that she would agree in time that it is better for us to see each other infrequently. For the present I leave her the prospect that I shall return to her in Germany as soon as my amnesty is forthcoming, so that she is to keep all the furniture and effects. After all, I don't want to make any vows and will let all depend on my future state of mind. Please will you too represent that our present parting is to be temporary only. * * *

I am waiting here in Geneva for a while until I am able to go on to Italy where I intend to spend the winter, probably in Venice. Solitude and the cessation of that torturing intercourse have already refreshed me somewhat. It has been useless to think of work lately. As soon as the mood to continue the composition of *Tristan* returns to me I shall know myself saved. That, indeed, must be my refuge; of the world I want nothing but to be left at peace for the work which some day shall belong to the world. Therefore I judge myself gently as I do others! * * * *

363. TO LOUIS SCHINDELMEISSER, DARMSTADT

GENEVA, 21st August, 1858.

* * * So much has happened to me this summer and, in particular, I have suffered so much through my wife's painful illness, that I have been incapacitated for most things and especially, unfortunately, for work. To give you a brief idea of my outward circumstances so that you may be able to judge my inner life, I will simply tell you that I have left Zurich and my refuge there for ever! * * * Your letter was forwarded to me here. As I * * need money and yet more money I am ready to accept your offer of friendly assistance. Listen then! I firmly believed that I should have *Tristan* ready for next winter season and accordingly engaged Härtel's to begin printing the score at once while I worked on. The first act is, therefore, actually in print, but there the matter ends for the moment! With the spring so many sufferings and calamities came upon me that it was only with difficulty that I could, in brighter intervals, make a rough draft of the second act. But I have got no farther and there can be no question of *Tristan* for the theatre before the winter of next year. Therefore—cordial thanks for your offer. * * *

Rienzi should be revived in Dresden one of these days. I do not think I can give any better advice to theatres friendly to me than to set about appropriating the opera with all speed. I have recently

cut it drastically. Fischer of Dresden already has the scores and I ask you in all seriousness to be one of the first to render this child of my youth. Do not hesitate long. * * * *

364. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, ZURICH

GENEVA, 25th August, 1858.

* * * * With you a particular guilt must always attach to a particular person; you take no account of Fate and the nature of things, but simply imagine that if this or that person had not existed everything would have been different. I can say no more to you on this subject; others will do so sometime and Heaven grant you find the right person to enlighten you. It is repugnant to me to renew the attempt and I will only say once more most definitely that nothing drove me to give up our Zurich home except the recognised impossibility of living on in such close proximity to our neighbours there. Things could be asked of the husband¹ by the wife which you and I could no longer ask of him. We could get along while, according to certain well-understood requirements of propriety, silence reigned between *all four of us*, but as soon as it came to speech between the *four of us* we could do so no longer. He accepted the announcement of my removal in the most friendly and gracious way—but he *did* accept it and moreover I was under obligation to go as all other ways to a good understanding became more and more difficult.—But enough! and indeed, too much! You will, I fear, brood over this again and fail to see the thing aright. * * * *

What Tichatschek may have taken into his head when I wrote to him that we were leaving Zurich, packing up, and selling certain trifles, is more than I can understand. He has written to me too about the pictures and the Erard. Do you think he is not quite all there? I shall reply to him as soon as I get his report on *Rienzi*. Naturally you will take no notice of this absurd interrogatory. I simply wish that our departure from Zurich should not look like a break-up, but like a removal with all our things kept together.—* * * *

365. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BERLIN

VENICE, 5th September, 1858.

* * I have been a week in Venice now. I was unhappy in Geneva and since, when I fled, I had no pleasure excursion in mind, but a permanent place of residence wherein to think and work, I willingly

¹ Otto Wesendonck. See No. 362.

let myself be persuaded by Karl's assurances that a removal to Venice, even at this time of year, could do me no harm. I do not regret it. * * * I have already written about the Erard. I feel that I shall soon be in a favourable frame of mind and in any event hope to finish *Tristan* in the course of the winter here. * * * *

* * * How we parted, how we passed the time together during this last visit of yours! ¹ * * * My poor, pitiable wife will never have an inkling of all that was involved. But all the more sincerely I wish her peace, forgetfulness, distraction and assuredly I hope she will soon feel better. Cosima's invitation, which she has told me about, has pleased me greatly. Comfort her if she comes to you! * * * *

366. TO THE SAME

VENICE, 27th September, 1858.

* * * * Recent heart-shattering experiences have made me more than ever negative in my attitude to the world; I feel almost entirely detached now from all wishes and desires. Only I should still prefer to condemn others to suffering as little as may be; when I know that their griefs are growing less, mine too will disappear. Events tell me clearly and decisively what I ought to do, so I shall never vacillate more; if I were not an artist I could become a saint; but this way of salvation is not destined for me. * * *

Probably Cosima will soon learn now what misery it is to exist and what is the only way of deliverance. One day, one hour can ripen more than years. As to myself I merely wonder that my hair has kept any of its colour. There were moments when I felt as if I must have become a very old man!—

My poor wife has had a hard time, yet it seems as though the trouble and labour of moving house, which the foolish woman was determined not to spare herself, have supported her. She is at present with her relatives at Zwickau where at least she enjoys peace and comfort. * * * *

367. TO FRANZ LISZT, STAYING AT MUNICH

VENICE, 27th September, 1858.

* * * * I do not enlarge on the moral necessity for my departure from Zurich; it must be known to you and I think I may take it that Hans or Cosima will have told you all that is necessary. Latterly circumstances made a further stay in Zurich unthinkable and a

¹ The Bülowes were staying with Wagner when the crisis with his wife occurred. Cf. *My Life*, p. 687.

decision taken months ago had ultimately to be put suddenly into effect. Each new day brought new intolerable torments; only my departure could end them. But this had to be put off from day to day for lack of the necessary money. I had to provide my wife with funds and make it possible for us to leave Zurich for good by the payment of bills, etc., which I should not otherwise have had to meet till the new year, etc. etc. The torment of passing day after day in the vain hope of money coming in was terrible. * * * During that time to have seen *you* suddenly walk into the house would have been a heavenly comfort to me and to all engaged in the conflict. * * * *

As regards the Countess d'Agoult, I came to know her through Cosima's visit to me. She came several times to music with us in the evening, bringing her daughter. She seemed very interested in my *Nibelungs*. Unfortunately I was not in the humour to try to get to know her mind better; æsthetic discussions appeal to me less and less; besides she showed no kind of inclination to lead me into them. On the few other occasions on which we met she showed me marked, well-bred, deliberate reserve. She never spoke of you to your confessedly most intimate friend. I happened accidentally to speak of the artistic value of your recent works; she listened to my views in silence. * * * *

You will be glad to hear that Venice has not disappointed my expectations. * * * I am waiting for my grand piano and hope to resume work without interruption next month. My thoughts are concentrated on finishing *Tristan*—and on nothing else.

I am very troubled about my poor wife. She has had to go through a terrible time and her bad state of health, in particular, has given me the utmost concern for months. * * * The poor thing utterly lacks the education to adopt a noble resignation which would command respect. For the present she is with relatives in Saxony and is to settle in Dresden later with our household goods. If ever I am allowed to enter Germany again I shall go to see her, and in any case I have no thought of leaving her altogether. * * * *

368. TO FRAU ELIZA WILLE, MARIAFELD

VENICE, 30th September, 1858.

Believe me, dear and esteemed friend, I have to keep a tight hold over myself just to go on enduring! Every hour almost I have to say to myself "Steady! steady!" or I should go to pieces altogether!—The only thing left for me is isolation, utter solitude. That is my one comfort, my one relief. And yet it is so unnatural,

particularly for me, who love to impart myself, wholly and unreservedly, to others. Only—everything about me is unnatural now. I know not family, relations—children; my marriage has been nothing but a test of patience and compassion. I can think of no friend to whom I can give my whole confidence without regretting it; I learn better every day how everlastingly I am misunderstood in greatest and in least. * * *

Everything is strange and cold around me! Not one comfort, not a look, not a soothing word. I have sworn to myself not even to get a dog. I am not to have the Beloved even near me. *She*¹ has her children, after all!

Ah, but that is not a reproach, only a lament, and I think she is content to take me as I am and feels for my sorrow! I have my art, of course! True, that gives me no joy, however, and horror seizes me when I look out from my work to the world to which, after all, it must belong and which can yet accept it only in a vilely mutilated form! * * * *

And how sweetly she helps me! What a heavenly letter² that was that you sent me from her to-day! The dear lovely creature—may she find comfort! Her friend is true to her, lives only through her—and can therefore endure!

Yes! It must be borne somehow—and it shall!—I tell myself that Venice will help me * * * I have no real life here as yet; there can be no question of that till I am at work again and I am still waiting for the piano! Let this suffice you for a description of the *terrain* upon which I have to make up my mind to live. * * * *

* * * The only soul I speak to is Ritter, who is silent enough never to disturb me; he too is alone, his wife having remained behind. * * * *

But what still gives my inner and outer life so strange, almost dream-like, a character is its complete lack of future. * * *

Greet the dear angel a thousand times!—and she will not despise the tender tears I shed, either! And enter into it all yourself through the power of your noble friendship! We are happy after all! * * *

369. TO FRAU JULIE RITTER, DRESDEN

VENICE, 9th October, 1858.

* * It is time that I gave you some sign of life so that I may earn one from you! * * *

My wife * * is thinking of going to Dresden shortly to set up a small house there with our household things—as is also my wish.

¹ Mathilde Wesendonck.

² Not published.

I can rely on your great kindness to receive her with friendship and forbearance. Her education and her intellectual limitations deprive her of the power of finding in me and my nature the consolation and inspiration which she has so greatly needed as compensation for the calamities of our exterior circumstances. * * *—For the present, may I ask you to give to my wife the sum of money which I may expect very shortly (and for which I am ever grateful to you) as I intend it for her immediate needs. * * *

It was remarkable that Karl should have acted upon my invitation to him to visit me just at the moment when I had decided on Italy as my place of residence. His enthusiastic descriptions made me decide on Venice, and so we are together again, getting on most excellently in a common complete seclusion. Forgive me once more for the former detestable irritability which certainly led my judgment astray. I am glad to count for something with Karl now, and he for his part is of inestimable value to me just because he is what he is. * * * *

370. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

VENICE, 19th October, 1858.

* * * * The pains and pangs of birth have their victorious issue now in all this wealth of beauty. The love of a tender woman¹ has made me happy; she dared to cast herself into an ocean of suffering and torment in order to say to me—"I love you!" Only he who knows all her tenderness can estimate how much she had to suffer. We were spared nothing—but as a result I am redeemed and she is blessedly happy because she knows it.

I have been alone for two months and feel renewed in all my being. I look at the world with other eyes than I have done hitherto. In a noble sense I have become indifferent to the world. * * * I face my outward lot with perfect patience; the thing that lifts me above the world has taken on a blessed and familiar aspect. * * * My work has become dearer than ever to me. I have just begun it again and it flows from my spirit like a gentle stream. * * * *

I have my Erard now. It stands in a great echoing hall which serves me for a study. It is there that *Tristan* is to be finished this winter. The first act, dearest friend, is quite complete; send to Härtel's for the proof sheets of the full score which is already in print. I was interrupted in working out the second act, which I had just lightly sketched, by the recent catastrophe and the visits which preceded it. I have taken it up again now. It will be very beautiful and is to be finished and in print by the end of this year at latest.

¹ Mathilde Wesendonck.

The last act is to follow by March, and if all goes as I hope, I shall witness a first performance about Easter. * * *

* * * Karl Ritter was pleasantly surprised by your unexpected greetings and returns them with the greatest warmth. He visited me last August in Zurich, where I got my first sight of him since the crisis of two years ago. I have wiped out remembrance of his folly¹ without a word. He appears very devoted to me now. He does not get on with his wife. She remained at home. * * * *

If you want to make my friend² happy sometime, tell her that you are satisfied with me. She does not need comfort. She shares my happiness, the noblest happiness which can fall to the lot of a human soul. * * *

371. TO LOUIS SCHINDELMEISSER, DARMSTADT

VENICE, 19th October, 1858.

* * * * I am very touched that you set so high a value on a first performance of *Tristan*. But listen, my friend, how matters stand. I cannot let this most intimate work be performed *at all*, unless it can first be done in my personal presence and under my direction. That is absolute. Well, the Grand Duke of Baden, whose amiable young wife has taken a special interest in me, has succeeded, after repeated efforts, in gaining me the prospect (through Dresden) of being allowed to visit a stated place in Germany for a stated period for the one and only purpose of producing a new work for the first time. You will understand no doubt that this place must now be Karlsruhe. The only thing I can do towards fulfilling your friendly wish is to put the opera in your hands so that you can give it immediately afterwards. Perhaps I may come myself to you a week after the Karlsruhe performance and hear yours.

* * * For the rest I can only wish that you will be pleased with the opera and find it suitable to your purpose. The libretto will soon be published and many people will probably rub their eyes over it, and in particular wonder how I am composing this or that—I have been disgracefully interrupted in my work. I am only just resuming it, and there is no question of its being finished before the end of winter. * * * *

372. TO KARL KLINDWORTH, LONDON

VENICE, 31st October, 1858.

* * * * I may possibly bring out an edition of the finished parts of *The Nibelungs* shortly.³ I shall give you further details next time.

¹ See No. 319, vol. i., p. 317.

² Mathilde Wesendonck.

³ See No. 315, note 1, vol. i., p. 315.

For the present I only want to beg you to undertake the promised revision or simplification of the pianoforte arrangements as speedily as possible. You would very greatly oblige me if you could get *The Rhinegold* ready next and very soon. Please send it to me then *via* Germany. Of course there is no hurry about *Young Siegfried* at present. I am really afraid of the sending back of the draft scores of the first act. I think after all it would be best if you were to keep them till next year and perhaps bring them to me personally. I hope to have finished *Tristan* by Easter.

The Grand Duke of Baden has contrived that I may go to Germany for a first performance of this new work. I should then go to Karlsruhe, where out of gratitude I should have to allow the first performance to take place. * * * *

373. TO ANTON PUSINELLI, DRESDEN

VENICE, 1st November, 1858.

* * I come to you to-day on a very melancholy matter. My wife is to spend this winter in Dresden. Probably she has arrived there already and may even have visited you. I remember the kindly and consoling information as to her state of health which you were so good as to give me last summer when I wrote describing her condition to you. I now entrust you with the poor invalid herself. Be her doctor, her adviser, her helper—if you can—her comforter if you cannot. My innermost conviction is that change of scene and friends, even a periodical separation from my society which has always been somewhat over-stimulating for her, must be good for the invalid and at least give her a chance of health, and this has determined me to part from her for a time. For her, Dresden is homely and may perhaps prove soothing. * * *

She has lately been with her brother-in-law [Tröger] who is himself a doctor. Wishing to be reassured as to her condition I wrote to him and his answer, which I received yesterday, I enclose for you. You see how little reassuring it is. I am very much overcome!—

She will probably be able to give you no very clear account of the origin of her condition. A certain organic weakness (perhaps originating in the glands, for her mother died of dropsy of the chest) probably developed in the Dresden days. Her increasing nervous prostration, however, arises principally from numerous violent and tragic episodes in our life. Nervous excitement and insomnia were marked as early as 1853. A doctor treated her for gout and employed hot baths and douches which excited her to the point of madness. She then learned the use of laudanum which was incautiously pre-

scribed to her in small doses for sleeplessness. When she experienced no result she increased the doses to some twenty drops, as she later confessed to me. Her increasing excitability led inevitably to frequent conflicts between us and—I confess it to you frankly—our life together finally became unbearable for this reason.—You will soon know yourself the details of her physical condition. Tell me everything openly, dear Anton, so that I may faithfully do everything I can to assist your treatment of the case. My behaviour and attitude towards her for the future shall be determined by only one consideration in the world—the heartfelt wish to contribute to her recovery, her solace, her protection. I shall make it my most pressing business to do everything that may serve to that end. If we can prolong her life for many years and keep her as free from pain and as comfortable as may be, the desire of my heart will be fulfilled, and I am ready to make any sacrifice to achieve this. For the present I hear to my consolation that—as was to be expected—she is already somewhat calmer and is looking a little better. Let me recommend the poor soul, whom I grieve for deeply, to your noble heart! Be to her what you always can be, and count on my ardent gratitude.—You will hear something from my wife of myself and my extremely secluded life. I shall tell you of it myself when next I write. * * *

374. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

VENICE, 14th November, 1858.

* * * * Do give up the fatal idea that I have some secret design against you, that I intend to get rid of you unawares, or the like. For the sake of a better, purified, more peaceful future for us both, I thought it best we should separate at present for a while, to avoid just that very thing which, to my grief, you are always harping on. My intentions were true and honourable in everything I said to you and alleged on that point. I reproach myself very bitterly for having let the heat of the moment betray me into meeting you with harshness and saying wounding and injurious things. It is *this* that you have to forgive me for, and my penitence is heartfelt. But for the future nothing shall shake my resolution to spare you any wound or slight. That is why I say to you, don't try to draw me on any more; it is useless and you cannot provoke me; I shall never meet you otherwise than mildly and kindly. As to my silence on certain matters, it is not my purpose to deceive you, but I am silent because they are not meet for discussion between us and ought simply to be

completely ignored and forgotten. That is my sole reason for not answering on the point. Believe me! I have made a final vow to myself on this matter! * * * *

375. TO THE SAME

VENICE, 14th November, 1858, evening.

* * * * Think of nothing but our reunion; that it may be a beautiful, enduring and blessed one for us both, you must care for your health to the exclusion of all else, and you can do nothing, nothing in the world, to this end unless—you achieve peace of mind! Do as I ask and, believe me, nothing can pain me so much now as to know that your sufferings are still being increased by these gloomy ideas; whereas nothing can rejoice me so much as to hear that you are better, as that proves to me that your mind is at ease about me, and that you are putting faith in me. This can only be if you steadily persist in not saying *another word* in future to *anyone* about the things that still upset you so. * * * Enjoy the performances of my operas—and if you really must have something to worry about, wait impatiently for me to get leave to return to produce my works myself and practise my art once more. We were far too much buried and thrown back upon ourselves there in Zurich. In the long run that was bound to do harm and make us captious. * * * Only give me plenty of leisure to finish *Tristan*—which should be done by the spring if I am undisturbed—and by then my return to Germany will certainly be assured. Perhaps it may happen even sooner; but if I should never be allowed to return at all (which of course is unthinkable), well, then you can rejoin me and we should have to say "*Valet*" to the pleasant prospect of Germany. *Then* we should have to settle in Paris where I would work with all my might to get my operas performed, and in the meantime *Tristan* would have to provide us with the means of living there in comfort. * * * *

But I simply must get finished with this confounded *Tristan*; it has got to bring us in a lot of money next year. *Rienzi*, unfortunately, is not going at all well! * * * *

It is *Vienna*, though, that still gives me most joy. Winterberger, Liszt's pupil who was with him in Zurich two years ago, has arrived here with a Russian princess¹ whose sons he is teaching. He saw *all* the performances of *Lohengrin* in Vienna after having often heard it before in Weimar. Well, he says that anything more perfect and entrancing it would be impossible to imagine; compared with

¹ Gallitzin. Cf. *My Life*, pp. 693, 694.

Weimar (in spite of Liszt!) he simply would not have recognised the opera again. * * * *And above all, the success!* How could it have been otherwise, after all, with *Lohengrin* in Vienna? They say the audience applauded like mad, and that every performance was a regular fête.—I confess it would give me great joy to hear something like that some day. Naturally I have now acquired a great liking for Vienna and—I think—you would like the place too. Well, we shall see! But don't be too impatient! Some day or other everything will suddenly turn out splendidly and we two will look at each other and ask amazed, "Where on earth have we been all this time? Have we been dreaming?"—

There now, I think I have caught up with all the news I can think of to tell you about myself. I hope it may please you a little!—Winter has come upon all Europe and on Venice too. What rarely happens here even in the depths of winter happened actually early in November—a snowfall which lay for several days! Not so bad! Add to that that the houses here are badly protected from the weather, have absurd stoves, etc. It was awful. I have kept fires burning all the time, particularly when I was ill, and wood here is far from cheap. I suppose we shall be done with it some day! I have had the doors and windows properly protected with beading and the stoves repaired and it is quite comfortable now. Besides the weather has grown mild again. For God's sake look after yourself properly! Just as I thought, those d——d parterre rooms are not fit for the winter. Go and get a good warm carpet put down at once—otherwise you shan't have your New Year's dividend! But how frightfully good Pauline is! *Isn't* she good! Such goodness is almost more than one can bear! I was uncommonly delighted with what you wrote to me about her. * * * Do see a lot of the Tscheckels; they will sweep away your cobwebs and ease your impatience!—

And so you haven't been to the Heines' and the Fischers' yet? And stand-offish with Lüttichau! Well I am glad he expressed himself so nicely! Oh, if the man had handled me rather more gently in the old days, as is due to an artist of my stamp, how many things would have happened differently, or not at all! Well, let us forget all that. I bear no grudge to anyone.—He will send you good tickets, of course; otherwise may the Devil take him, and you will proudly pay your money for the gallery—that's understood.—

I *still* cannot conceive how they could raise serious difficulties in the way of your residence in Dresden. But it really is shocking that you have to report to the police! * * * *

376. TO ANTON PUSINELLI, DRESDEN

VENICE, 18th November, 1858.

* * Accept my most cordial thanks for your letter which I have just received! Sad as is the circumstance of which it treats, yet I breathe again to know that my poor wife is in your hands, under your care. May Heaven bless you if you can continue to give me such comfort as you have this time been able to indicate. You would not believe how much good you do me by this care for the sufferer!—But what I chiefly want to tell you is simply that you may count absolutely on my moral co-operation in this course of treatment. By separation for a time I have achieved the object I instinctively sought—that is, I am now in a position to exercise a calming and conciliating influence upon her mind. Even when we were actually living together this was my firm intention latterly in view of her melancholy state of health, and yet the agitation, the excitement of the moment, would now and then get the better of me, the more so that I, too, have an irritable nature and that these everlasting useless, senseless vexations imposed much very real suffering on me.

Here, at a distance, I can choose the hour and the mood when I am entirely master of myself and can handle my purpose with full loyalty to my duty. This encourages me to hope for the best.—For the rest, believe me, there is not, and never has been any question of serious matrimonial differences. Rather, my torment was that she put a wrong construction on much that went on in my mind and heart simply because—to speak frankly—she is incapable of understanding the real truth of these things. This great intellectual difference is indeed the source of many painful misunderstandings between us. Happily I can now get the peace of mind necessary to deal with her and I hope that my last letter will have contributed greatly to soothe her spirit. I shall go on, steadfastly. * * * *

377. TO FRAU JULIE RITTER, DRESDEN

VENICE, 19th November, 1858.

* * Karl is leaving to-morrow to go to you to celebrate your birthday. It makes me very happy to think of his return; I feel as if he would be bringing me you yourself—my high estimate of the power of personal contact! * * *

Your dear letter troubled me very much because it made me see how painful it was to you to have to tell me things, the telling of which I probably ought to have spared you. I had not the slightest idea that you had suffered losses,¹ but all the same I had been

¹ Pecuniary losses; cf. Wagner's letter to his wife, 23 March, 1859.

hoping from half-year to half-year to be in a position to give you reassuring news of my circumstances and ask you to bring to an end the sacrifices which your dear family have been making for me. When last Easter you renewed your remittance I took it as a sign of your unchanging sympathy, and it had the further great value that I had to meet the expenses of occupying the little estate I had so longed for and which took all my resources. * * * Your dear offer to reserve the allowance to me for one year more has—through Karl's mediation—relieved me of all anxiety. For one more year, then, I shall tax your kindness and I believe that I have good grounds to assure you that by next year you will see me in a position to be able with all gratitude to decline your kind offices for the future. * * * *

378. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

VENICE, 30th November, 1858.

* * * * It is a very great relief to me to hear that you are satisfied with Natalie. God grant it may so continue! Give her greetings from me and tell her she must go on doing well and I for my part will then faithfully carry out my promise to her.—

It is just what I might have expected that you have been using your interest to get my pardon and it would be almost an insult to thank you for it. Only this much then—do not build on it too much! All the same I herewith enclose the answer to your questions; make what use you like of it. I for *my* part believe that only Prussia can help me and should almost prefer it that way. They can allow me to go there *in spite of King Johann*, and if he remains obdurate, I have already made up my mind what to do to achieve my end. * * *

379. TO JACOB SULZER, ZURICH ¹

VENICE, 3rd December, 1858.

* * Do you really think that I would leave you without a single glance back? Whatever you may think of me you must surely think well enough of me to believe that I should ever preserve and cling to the imperishable value of your personality, so significantly and deeply involved in my life. Recent years have kept us much apart; it might have seemed better, perhaps, that each should go his own way without any forced regard for the other. Our relationship became abstract but at the same time we avoided artificiality, which a false actuality might have imparted. Thus—at least in your image

¹ *An Freunde*, p. 237.

as retained by me—all that might mutually have seemed strange or even repellent was smoothed and rubbed away and purged of the dross of personality, and the true matter of character shone out all the purer. I can now hold fast to my *interior* knowledge of you, a very great and true gain, the joy of which I want to express to you to-day. You are my first and only experience of what it means to associate with greatness of character. I am proud that you should at one time have taken the trouble to seek an understanding with me. The conditions and needs of a nature such as mine, made for art alone, must in the end compel me to follow paths where a pre-eminently practical nature like yours, however theoretically broad-minded and intelligent, can only follow from afar. Be assured that I shall never cease to bend an inquiring gaze on your face, never seek to withdraw myself from your eyes' searching glance. I know that as long as I remain true to myself I shall experience the recurring moment in which, despite all dissimilarity, our eyes will meet in full mutual understanding.—And so, take my thanks for the great, the priceless, gift of your friendship, which I shall strive to keep dear and unprofaned to my life's end!—

Whatever you may have heard about my apparently sudden departure from Zurich I must leave as it stands. [Alexander] Müller was, I believe, to some extent initiated and could supply you with information, but it is very doubtful if he is intelligent enough to supply that information correctly. At the time it was impossible for me to take an ordinary polite farewell of Zurich. I had to run the risk of leaving my friends in doubt about me for a while, knowing that when I had time and leisure I could give them the necessary explanations. You are the first to whom I write with this end in view and—may very likely be the *only* one, for to speak truth, you are the only one whom I really care about.

From certain hints I gave it probably did not escape you that my wife's condition, more particularly as it resulted from the increasing gravity of her heart disease, became so disquieting to me that at last some total change in our way of life had to be considered. Unfortunately it chanced that by what I can only call a petty-minded interpretation of certain personal relations of mine which were really quite unconnected with our matrimonial relation, she believed herself actually wronged. Thereupon, influenced largely by her painful physical condition (which in these cases, of course, affects the mind very much), she lost her customary judgment and forgot herself so far as to open the subject with our near neighbours.¹ Such a disturbance necessarily involved our neighbourly relations

¹ See No. 362.

and despite my sincere efforts to restore them I was finally forced to the decision to give up our residence in Zurich.

My consequent sufferings on all hands, due *both* to stupidity and passion, must surely absolve me from any guilt *I* may have incurred in this matter. In making this decision and carrying it through in the face of uncommon obstacles I had to renounce many things which had grown dear to me, of which I will only mention one—the charming, the long-desired house and plot of land.—But enough! It was to be, and for the present the result shows that I did the best as well as the most righteous thing possible. Among my motives for making the change was the need to bring about a temporary separation between myself and my wife. In our constant close association, quite without outside distraction, it became impossible for me with my excitable temperament always and under all circumstances to remember her ill-health of body and mind. To my bitter regret quarrels of ever-increasing violence recurred and ultimately became daily matters and I could not help becoming emotionally involved. I should have been obliged to make some change if only for her health's sake. I am now very pleased with the result. In Dresden, well cared for, among old acquaintances and artistic pleasures, my wife is already much better, and no doubt the best of all is that my intercourse with her from a distance is something quite different and more beneficial than, with the best intentions, I was able to make it when I was beside her. I can now choose time and mood in which to speak to her and correct her (till quite recently) constantly recurring passionate outbursts, and in this way have succeeded so well that she has really begun to grow calmer. * * *

I will tell you about myself and my probable future another time. Besides, for the present there is practically nothing to be said—especially as regards my future. I am working sedulously to finish my *Tristan*. Unfortunately the work has been repeatedly interrupted by illness. The same ailment which keeps me from my desk has forced me to break off in the midst of this letter. * *

You will probably wonder why I have chosen Venice (which impressed you so unfavourably on your journey through it) as best adapted for my present needs. I tried to find a place where I could live quite unnoticed and secluded and work entirely undisturbed. * * *

For to-day please be content with these few lines, and to give my very kindest regards to your dear wife, your son and to my friends Bohm, Hagenbuch and Müller when you see them. If you

should some time visit the Wesendoncks do not forget to give them news of me and convey my best greetings. * * *

Finally, accept the assurance, dearest friend, that I do not abandon either the hope or the effort to repay some day the great sacrifice¹ you made for me. Wholly without means and without any assured income, I am now more than ever thrown back on the uncertain profits on my operas, which, for me, have the character of lottery winnings. Still, it is not inconceivable that things may change very definitely in this respect and you may believe my sincere assurance that I shall joyfully take advantage of the first favourable change to effect a definite and secure establishment of my affairs and show my recognition and gratitude to you, even if I can do no more than replace what was lent me and—as I know—practically written off. * * * *

380. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

VENICE, 5th December, 1858.

* * * * If anything could induce me to push *Rienzi* at this time of day, it could only be, as you will understand, the desire to make a good income quickly, thus relieving my impecunious and destitute condition. In itself I look on this revival as an anachronism, and quite premature at present. After the opera's recent great success in Dresden I was for a time in hopes that I should make enough to supply my present wants by the rapid sale of the work. These hopes, however, have been in the main disappointed. * * * Whether I ever produce my *Nibelungs* is, in the deepest sense, a matter of supreme indifference to me, but in any case I shall complete it, for I do not nourish my inspiration and strength for works of this kind on hopes for the realisation of which I should need the aid of the Grand Duke of Weimar and Dingelstedt! * * * *

381. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

VENICE, 10th December, 1858, evening.

* * * * This has been an odd time for me as I haven't seen a soul for three weeks except the doctor and the maid-servant. Just once Prince Dolgoruki called on me and once Winterberger, and I must confess I found their visits overlong and was glad when they left. Really I can dispense altogether with society and least of all do I want to be entertained. My chief need is health and undisturbed peace of mind to enable me to work, for it is my work alone that really uplifts me and keeps me going.—* * * *

¹ Sulzer had repeatedly helped Wagner with considerable sums of money.

I have not much more to say about the *Lohengrin* project in Dresden. Only Mme. Ney must have changed in appearance inconceivably for the better if I am to believe your description. * * * She is an excellent singer, but dramatic expression, essential soul, she has not. I simply cannot conceive of her as Elsa—perhaps as Ortrud. But don't push this opera so hard in Dresden. In the first place it will certainly bring me no profit there, and in the second place it still sickens me to think that in the very place where I wanted to produce it first it is to be pulled to pieces by a conductor so exquisitely brainless as Krebs. * * * *

382. TO THE SAME

VENICE, 15th December, 1858.

* * * * The new Minister of Justice, Behr, stands in fairly good repute. I believe I shall do myself no harm if I tell him my mind fully and clearly about my situation. Accordingly I will write to him, calling special attention to the fact that I am now compelled to come to a decision affecting the whole course of my life and begging him to have the records¹ laid before him to see what is charged against me and to inform me subsequently what my prospects might be, whereupon I should decide whether or not to apply for a safe-conduct and submit myself for an inquiry. I shall give him to understand that the state of my health would make it impossible for me to undergo arrest for a long—or even for a short period. * * * I shall then see his answer and upon *this answer* all will depend. He is sure to lay the matter before the king, and consequently if the letter does not contain express guarantees—or at least sufficient to satisfy me—in the event of my voluntary surrender (in compliance with the forms of the law only), or if on the contrary it is written in the usual dry legal tone, I shall owe it to myself to say “*Valet*” to my German hopes.—* * *—* * * If the Minister's² answer is such that I must renounce henceforth all prospect of return I should definitely choose Paris for my permanent domicile from next autumn on. * * * Then I should make Strasburg the place where I should habitually first produce my operas, beginning at once this summer with *Tristan*. * * * *

383. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

[VENICE, about 20th December, 1858.]

* * * For a long time I have been quite alone. Karl Ritter has left me to pay his sick mother a birthday visit. When he went I was

¹ About Wagner's part in the Dresden Revolution of 1849.² It was a refusal. See Nos. 385, 387, 394, 396.

just recovering from an illness which interrupted the work I had hardly begun. I promised him that I should have a large portion of *Tristan* finished by the time he returned. However, I have had to make the best of being again confined to my room—this time, as a result of an injury to my leg, I have been held fast to my chair and have had to be carried to bed. This has only just come to an end; a few days ago I had my first ride in a gondola since my illness. * * *

I had a visit from an amiable, highly cultivated and intelligent man, a Prince Dolgoruckow. I was pleased when he came but still more pleased when he went away. I am perfectly content not to be entertained and amused. I had not much to read and, indeed, under such conditions, I do not read much. However I ordered W. von Humboldt's letters; they did not please me especially, indeed I found it difficult to read much of them. * * *

Schiller interested me more, and I am reading him now with uncommon pleasure. Goethe hardly holds his own with me beside this unusually sympathetic nature. The man was eaten up with the passion for knowledge! One would imagine he never lived but only pressed towards intellectual light and warmth. His ill-health did not apparently stand in his way here. * * *

Then I have been studying philosophy a great deal and have reached conclusions which supplement and emend my friend Schopenhauer. But I would rather meditate on such matters than write about them. My brain is teeming again, though, with poetic projects. I have been very busy with *Parzival*¹; in particular I have an increasingly vital and enthralling conception of a remarkable being, a marvellous female world spirit (the Gralsbotin²). If I ever achieve this poem it will be something quite unprecedented. I cannot imagine how long I shall have to live if I am to carry out all my plans. If I really clung to life, I could believe a long one was to be granted me by reason of these numerous projects. * * *

This time as I draw near to the end of *Tristan* I have a sense of being opposed by Fate; but this cannot make me work on it more cursorily. On the contrary, I compose as if I meant to work on nothing else for the rest of my life. Consequently it will be more beautiful than anything I have ever done. I work with such care that the slightest phrase has for me the significance of a whole act. And since it is *Tristan* I speak of, I must tell you of my joy at receiving the first copy of the newly-printed poem just at the right moment to send it to you as a birthday present. * * *

¹ Wagner spelt the name so at first.

² Grail-Bearer. (TRANS.)

384. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

[VENICE], *St. Silvester's Eve*, 1858.

* * * Did I not tell you plainly and definitely that I am trying to raise money at all costs? * * * Not a word? Not a halfpenny?

Well, then! I haven't another ten gulden—can't pay the rent—can't send anything to my wife who wrote a fortnight ago to say that she had very little left. But this is only temporary. Next Easter and when *Tristan* is ready I shall have more than I need. Only for the present I am let down on all hands—on all—on all! There is no definite prospect of any money coming in from any quarter.—* * *

* * * My Franz, when you see the second act of *Tristan* you will admit that I need a lot of money. I am a great spendthrift—but really, something does come of it—and you know that. But meditate on it. And never believe I take tiffs with Dingelstedt, the [Grand] Duke [of Weimar] or anyone else very seriously. All I need of the world is money—I have everything else. *You* and your delight in the first act of *Tristan* are responsible for this paroxysm of arrogance. When you see the second you will be able to forgive me for doing nothing to-day but cry "Money, money!—it matters not how or whence!" *Tristan* will pay for all! * * * *

385. TO THE SAME

VENICE, 2nd January, 1859.

* * * * I tell you that in ten years I have grown accustomed to exile and that my amnesty is now less important to me than the guarantee of an existence free from care, comfortable and secure for the rest of my life. Do not be surprised. A return to Germany is of only relative value to me; the one positive gain would be to be able to see you and be with you more often. The prospective productions of my operas under my direction could not possibly compensate me for the exertion, trouble and annoyance. I have never got real pleasure out of the performance of any opera of mine and can expect even less in the future. My ideal demands are higher and my sensibility has become markedly more acute in the last ten years of total separation from present-day artistic public activity. * * *

You may believe me implicitly when I tell you that my one and only reason for living at this moment and for continuing to live, is the irresistible impulse to complete a number of works of art still quickening within me. I know with absolute certitude that this act of creation, of fulfilment, is the only thing that satisfies me and attaches me (often incomprehensibly) to life. I can, on the other

hand, very well forgo all prospect of seeing my works produced. I know, therefore, that an amnesty before the completion of *Tristan* would only embarrass me. No prospect, not even that of producing *Lohengrin*, could persuade me to leave my present abode until my work is finished. Guess the rest then!

* * * What I require, on the contrary, is to be endowed with an honourable and ample pension, to the end that I may be able to create my works of art undisturbed and quite independent of external success.—

Totally without means or resources of any kind, I am forced to rely (*legaliter*) on the income derived from my operas. Anyone with real knowledge of the quality of my works, with feeling and esteem for their peculiar and distinctive nature, must see that, I being what I am and our theatre what it is, I ought never to be obliged to make merchandise of my works. * * * In justice I ought to be relieved of all necessity for counting definitely on these takings and placed in a position in which I can regard them as an accidental * * surplus *. In this way and through the relation thus achieved with our very dirty theatrical art industry, I should be protected by my contemporaries in a way worthy of me, of my efforts and distinctive talents, and suitably equipped with means for further creations. Nothing but an ample and settled pension can secure this to me and the only source of such a pension must be a concerted action on the part of those German princes in whom I have inspired interest.

For this purpose I have in view the Grand Dukes of Weimar and Baden in the first place; one of these would have to take the lead and the Duke of Coburg, the Prince of Prussia, and perhaps also the King of Hanover and the Grand Duke of Hesse-Darmstadt should be associated.

I should have to insist on some such combination for the particular reason that if it is to serve its purpose and my, admittedly, somewhat fastidious and not altogether ordinary needs, the pension must amount to two or three thousand thalers at least. I do not blush to name such a sum. I know by experience, being what I am and my work being on the scale I have set, that I cannot well do with less, while on the other hand I am well aware that artists such as Mendelssohn (despite the fact that he was a man of private means) have been accorded equally large honorary salaries—even by a *single* patron.

I ask you, then, definitely and finally—whether you will take the initiative¹ in this matter? At the same time I must draw

¹ Liszt was very displeased with this letter and did not take the step, which he regarded as foredoomed to failure.

attention to the fact that after mature consideration, I must abide by the character of my demand. I could not accept even a specific appointment at Weimar, however much freedom it left me, and even if it were equal to yours, for the reason that the salary would not be sufficient for my purpose and since it could not radically help my situation, could only be a dangerous palliative. Once more—I want a thorough settlement of my pecuniary affairs, enough to provide amply for and determine my future artistic activities. I am nearly forty-six and am therefore speaking of a future of probably ten years at most.— * * * *

386. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

VENICE, 3rd January, 1859.

* * * * Karl [Ritter] has just come to pay an evening visit. He is very attached to me now and I have become equally fond of him. My object now is to help him on with his work. Liszt wants him to write an opera ¹ soon. I am egging him on too and I think it will come off. Anyhow he has it in him to do it. For the rest I am as well known here as a spotted dog, chiefly because of my grey fur cap. People nudge one another and point at me. * * * *

387. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

VENICE, 19th January, 1859.

* * * * My poetic conceptions have always been so far in advance of my experience that I can regard my moral education as determined and effected almost solely by these conceptions. *The Flying Dutchman*, *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin*, *The Nibelungs*, *Wotan* were all in my brain before they became part of my experience. But it will not be difficult for you to appreciate in what a remarkable relation I now stand to *Tristan*. I say openly (for this work belongs, if not to the world, at least to all purified souls) that never was an idea so clearly embodied in experience. How far the two—the idea and the experience—were mutually predeterminative is a subject of such marvellous subtlety that the ordinary processes of thought can only present it in inadequate and distorted form. And now—with my spirit full of intuitions of Savitri, *Parzival* ² striving to take imaginative shape—when I bend brooding in formative stillness over the completion of my artistic creation in *Tristan*, who can

¹ Karl Ritter, who at that time only wrote verse, was successful in Florence in 1865 with his opera *Dea risorta*. Liszt also was urgent that Ritter should compose an opera. (Cf. his letter to Wagner, 26 December, 1858.)

² See No. 383, note 1.

imagine the wonder that fills me and so raps me from this world that I am almost persuaded that I have already overcome it? *You* can guess it! *You* know it! Yes, and probably you alone! * * * *

* * * I hear from Dresden that I am expected to go there under a safe-conduct, appear in person before the courts and stand my trial, in return for which, even in case of condemnation, I might be sure of receiving the King's pardon. Well, that would be all very well for a man who could attain all he wanted to make his life happy by such a submission, after undergoing the disgusting chicanery of the judicial inquiry. But—my God!—what should *I* gain by it? For the very doubtful satisfaction of a few possible performances of my works, I should have this absolutely certain annoyance, worry and overstrain, all the more inevitable now that ten years of seclusion have made me intensely sensitive to contact with this horrible traffic in art which I should still have to employ as means to my end! Accordingly I have not acceded to these Dresden suggestions. To tell the truth, while I work my feet hardly touch solid earth! I could not allow any of my new works to be performed without taking part personally. The Grand Duke of Baden seems to be the prince who is most active and faithful in my interests. He has let me know that I can count with certainty on producing *Tristan* under my own direction at Karlsruhe. They would like to give it on September 6th, the birthday of the Grand Duke.

I should not object to that, and the persistent interest of this amiable young prince has warmed my heart towards him. We shall see whether he carries his purpose through and—whether I am ready. I have yet a great deal of serious work before me. Still, I hope now to be able to go on without interruption. I shall certainly not have it finished before June. After that if circumstances are unchanged I think of leaving Venice and seeking my Swiss mountains again. * * *

Karl Ritter came back on New Year's Day and comes to see me every evening at 8 o'clock. He tells me that he found my wife looking somewhat better. On the whole things seem to be going tolerably well with her and I take care that she lacks nothing for her comfort. * * *

388. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BERLIN

VENICE, 23rd January, 1859.

* * * * Liszt has made the new year begin sadly for me. He had a letter¹ from me, aimed solely against Dingelstedt, but, apart from that, couched in a certain humour which my friends for the

¹ No. 384.

most part know and understand; but he misunderstood it and answered it in an injured fashion so that I—and Karl who knows the circumstances—could not for a long time contain our amazement. I did all I could to help him to a belated comprehension of my letter, for I sincerely desired to free him from the madness which led him to suppose that I mocked him and his delight in *Tristan*. He has not answered¹ yet; I should be sorry if pride holds him back from admitting at once that at a critical moment he allowed himself to be grievously deceived into misunderstanding a friend. I do not doubt for a moment that he will see the truth, and feel certain that his friendship will last, although I cannot help wishing for a cure of the evil from which our friendship obviously suffers—that is, lack of personal contact and intercourse. Now I realise more than ever that I must not let myself go entirely with Liszt and must exercise a certain reserve in my relations with him. He does not in the least understand my humour.— * * * *

I am still rather unwell and am *never* without ache or pain. But I am working again with eagerness. To-morrow I am sending part of the second act to Härtel's. * * * When you come to know it you will realise that in a life like mine I could only rarely and laboriously secure the appropriate hours for such work as this. I hope you will be satisfied with it. In the spring months, March, April and May, I believe I shall accomplish the third act. If only I can get interior and exterior peace I know it would not take me long. The performance is fixed tentatively for September 6th—the Grand Duke's birthday—at Karlsruhe. It is doubtful whether I shall be amnestied by then, but the Grand Duke means me to come and stay with him on his own responsibility; he asks me, however, not to let a word of this get abroad *beforehand* as otherwise this bold move would become impossible. I earnestly beg you to act accordingly.—* * * *

389. TO ALBERT NIEMANN, HANOVER

VENICE, 25th January, 1859.

* * This time I have left your friendly letter rather long unanswered. I am often so overwhelmed with correspondence that I am forced to put off writing a letter for which I need to be in the vein. I am sorry that you have taken my report of the rumour about your "dread" of *Rienzi*, amiss. You very rightly opine that it was mere green-room gossip, but I believed the best thing to do

¹ Liszt did not come round till 17 February, 1859, whereupon Wagner wrote very affectionately. See No. 396.

was to tell you frankly of the matter. I hope it may have the effect of bringing us to a *really good understanding* on this occasion so that we can achieve an original piece of work. I had indeed given up this *Rienzi* altogether. Through Tichatschek's huge vocal skill * * it had got the name of being his speciality which he only could represent successfully. Now that I have come across you, my interest in the whole thing has revived and I am glad of the opportunity of going over the ground with you as well as can be done by letter.

In studying the main trend of this character the chief thing, then, as I have already intimated, is to have a firm grasp of the following.

Nothing influenced *Rienzi's* youth more strongly than the brutal murder of his small brother by the soldiery of the *nobili*, against whom he could get no justice. Feeling at first this longing for vengeance which he was unable to satisfy and brooding over it, he recognised the grounds of the evil in the *universal* misery of his time and more especially of his own country. To get at the cause he studied the history of his country, up to its source in Roman antiquity, plunged with enthusiasm into contemplation of the sublimity and greatness of ancient Rome, and then, turning to the present, became conscious of monstrous corruption. Ceasing to brood on his unsatisfied vengeance he looks upon a world sunk in degradation and determines to set it free. In this way the original "vendetta" motive is purified, becomes inspired, exalted patriotism, which thrusts back all memory of personal injury, and gives him the miraculous power which, for a season, he exercises over his people. *Rienzi's* exact opposite is presented in *Adriano*. In *him* the foundation is based on the enthusiasm which *Rienzi* knows so well how to inspire in the lad on the ground of his love for *Irene*. But instead of maintaining the enthusiasm which in time lifts *Rienzi* above all natural and personal attachments, *Adriano* sinks down to the position whence *Rienzi* set out. "Blood" comes between the two and *Adriano* cannot rise above the emotions of the vendetta. He remains tangled in mere family ties (whereas *Rienzi* sees nothing but the state as a whole). *Adriano*, however, craves for revenge, scarcely controlled by his love, and perishes powerless and witless, while *Rienzi*, raising the battle hymn, allows himself to be crushed amidst the ruins of the Capitol by an ungrateful and misguided people.

Apart from picturesque detail this is the main trend of *Rienzi's* characterisation, and must be strongly emphasised by the actor. * * * *

I do not know whether I have made myself clear, but I have grown warm over this youthful subject of mine which I only rightly understand now. I hope I may have imparted some of my warmth



LUDWIG GEYER

*From H. S. Chamberlain, "Richard Wagner," published by Messrs. Friedrich
Bruckmann, Munich*

to you, for thus only will you find the true path of sincerity and profound understanding, things I could never ask of the good, excellent Tichatschek—I do not doubt your success. You must popularise this opera.—* * *

390. TO HIS SISTER, CECILIE AVENARIUS, LEIPZIG

VENICE, 28th January, 1859.

* * * I am utterly solitary and live almost exclusively on imagined and remembered contacts. Wide as this circle is, you are often to the fore in it. * * *

Father Geyer's ¹ portrait is always before me now, on my desk. An acquaintance, a friend of Hermann Brockhaus's sons, went from Zurich to Leipzig and took a splendidly successful and remarkable photograph from the portrait with which he very much surprised and gratified me on his return. It was one of the very few things that I took with me on my departure from Zurich. It serves as a sort of link with the world, wherein otherwise a sense of detachment and loneliness preponderates.—* * *

* * * The real cause of the nameless afflictions and shocks which have been my portion in recent years was my wife's sad state of health. Incredibly rash and passionate as was her behaviour in circumstances calling for the greatest delicacy, I cannot, after all, be really angry with her. Everyone suffers in his own way and she in hers, but her sufferings are particularly acute. One has only to imagine a heart beating incessantly in a manner which most of us only experience in moments of deadly fear, added to that, a year of dreadful sleeplessness! One cannot possibly hold a fellow-creature who suffers such torments responsible for all that he does in a state of semi-madness. Nevertheless our life together at last became intolerable. In order to keep on I had to seek fresh strength in solitude and that I knew Minna, too, would be the better for change and such distraction as was possible. She really seems to be somewhat better in Dresden; although I learn to my sorrow that she has again fallen under the influence of tale-bearers. Now that I have recovered a little calm and composure I am determined always to treat her with the care and gentleness which her condition most urgently requires if it is to be improved, being as it is materially influenced by her state of mind. Her life is put so utterly into my hand that I, who could speedily bring about her death, must naturally stretch out that hand only in care for her. * * * *

* * * I think of spending next winter with Minna. Where? That

¹ Wagner recognised him as his real father. Cf. *Mein Leben*, note, p. 1008, W. Altmann's edition.

must depend very much on her state of health. In any case I must look out for a mild southern climate. But it is all quite unsettled. I loathe Paris. Venice suits me very well for the present. I live here remote from the world, between sky and sea, in great seclusion. Unfortunately I have often been ill, not seriously, perhaps, but most depressingly. I think of remaining here till June.—

At your convenience, ask Edward if he would be so kind as to consider and—if it is not troubling him too much—to let me know *how* I could best and most successfully bring the poem¹ of my *Nibelungen Ring* before the public. I cannot avoid the conviction that this poem should excite notice and lasting regard as a purely literary work. To this end, however, the format of the edition must contribute, and Härtel's conception and working out of such things as mere adjuncts of printed musical works do not seem to me at all appropriate. Please ask Edward about it!—* * * *

391. TO KARL KLINDWORTH, LONDON

VENICE, 1st February, 1859.

* * I have long had it on my conscience to write to you. But I have long been waiting for a definite settlement with Härtel's. This is very difficult to achieve but I must say in excuse that it is probably due to the unusual matter [*The Ring of the Nibelungs*] with which we are dealing. But I must soon get a decision now. I propose provisionally to give up all idea of having the scores printed and to make this depend on the result of a subscription at a suitable time. In this way I hope to get substantial payment for the pianoforte abridgments; for *I* should have been in a sense obliged to pay for the printing of the scores—by surrender of the honorarium. I have naturally insisted on payment for *your* work and suggested that you would be willing to do pianoforte arrangements *without* words. Well, we shall see. I am still doubtful if Härtel's will accept my latest offer.

It is a miserable world. You can scarcely imagine how unprofitably I am spending my time here. Most unhappily I am seldom able to work. I have been ill frequently—and no wonder. I am now doing the instrumentation of the second act of *Tristan*. I work very slowly—but then, I only write down the best I can conceive. I have never yet, perhaps, made a piece of music like this second act. You will like it.

Your pleasure in *Siegfried* came to me as from a vanished world. I have utterly forgotten all of it. But it will come back to me—

¹ First published in 1863 by J. J. Weber, Leipzig.

I am sure of that. Probably it will greatly invigorate me, too, but first I must drink my cup of sorrow to the dregs. When one has really done with life the game goes better.

I hear nothing from Weimar but what you have heard¹ is really an old story. It is Liszt's *point d'honneur*. But the question is how matters stand with my amnesty. If the few princes friendly to me cannot put pressure on the National Diet, Saxony will not reinstate me. We'll see!—

Tristan is for Karlsruhe in September—provisionally. But I am still uncertain whether I can have it finished. My humour for work hangs on a thread which may snap any moment. My poor wife gives me great anxiety. I fear that her health must be my one object for a long time to come. It is an inexhaustible source of sorrow to me!—

If all goes well I shall complete *Tristan* in June and stay here till then. * * *

Your work will undoubtedly be excellent. You know what you are about. I am delighted with the act from *Siegfried*. As soon as you have a safe opportunity send the score drafts to Härtel's (for me). On thinking it over I realise that I have never lost a package in the post. Perhaps you could venture to Venice yourself. (Same old address!)

I have recently had an offer from New York to produce my operas there next winter. I hold it over, but have it in mind to recommend you² to conduct—as my representative. * * *

* * * You must become a kapellmeister. This pianoforte teaching in London is no good.— * * *

392. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BERLIN

VENICE, 6th February, 1859.

* * * * I have been and still am so enraged by the unheard-of wickedness of the Saxon Government³ that my feelings prompt me to go away at once, without the slightest attempt to soften the harshness with which they are treating me. Still, I have allowed myself to be persuaded to apply to the Archduke Maximilian in Milan for a suspension of the order on the basis of a medical certificate. I shall let all depend on whether he behaves decently⁴ and take no further steps. The only thing that I care about in the

¹ The performance of *The Ring* in Weimar. See No. 396.

² See Nos. 407, 408, 417, also a letter to his wife, 27 February, 1859.

³ Saxony had pressed for Wagner's expulsion from Venice. See Nos. 395, 396

⁴ He did so. See No. 395, and *My Life*, p. 700.

matter is to avoid a new interruption in my work, for I have reason to fear that in my present sensitive condition another break may keep me from ever completing *Tristan*. For *this* consideration I was ready to sacrifice my indignation.

I wait in great perturbation. My weariness of life has greatly increased. My sole refuge is in forgetfulness of all my circumstances, so that I can get courage and spirit for my work; but these constant reminders of the wretchedness of my existence must lead in the end to my giving up altogether.

I cannot, therefore, tell you much about my immediate future. I am thinking of taking a final step shortly to find out, once for all, whether these Saxon intrigues against me are to come to an end or not. I shall do so in order to decide definitely where I am to make my final home. If it is to be abroad, I will solemnly declare that I never want to see Germany again. * * *

Hans—one more request! I should be glad to make money out of the pianoforte arrangement of *The Rhinegold*. Härtel's annoy me unbearably. I cannot establish any permanent connection with the *ancien régime*. What I want is a young enterprising publisher, with his name still to make and therefore inclined to take some risk and not afraid of making some sacrifice. Surely there must be someone like this who would be ready—even by the ordinary standard of calculation—to take the chance of a small loss to make a name for a young and still unknown business by a noteworthy enterprise? That is what I need—for I, too, am risking everything. Is there no one¹ you can suggest?

* * * —Tell Cosima, that if she regrets having sent me such a letter as her last, she may continue to send me nothing but letters which she regrets having sent! Such regrettable letters are my only comfort. In effusions like these I come all at once to true knowledge of myself; I attain blessed quietude and a deep consciousness of interior peace. Tell her that! And give her my warmest greetings!— * * *

393. TO THE SAME

VENICE, 10th February, 1859.

* * * * If you want to perform the *Tristan Overture* in Prague, I have nothing against it. Only you must make a close for it yourself. You cannot expect me to do that.²— * * * *

¹ Bülow did not know of anyone.

² Wagner did not get to this stage till nearly the end of the year. See letter to Mathilde Wesendonck, No. 451.

394. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

VENICE, 10th February, 1859.

* * * * Yesterday, too, I dispatched an important letter to Dresden—my last attempt to discover what I may expect from there. After mature consideration, however, I have not addressed this question to the Minister of Justice * * but looked round for some influential, highly placed personage, who has easy access to the King and is himself approachable for discussion. So I hit on my old friend Lüttichau, who, after all, is the most closely connected with me of all those folk and to whom, moreover, in the event of things going well, I can make a sound offer for the settlement of that advance from the Pension Fund which I left unrepaid. I believe this was the best thing to do.¹ * * * *

I have no further special incidents to relate, except that they mean to give my operas in Moscow. * * * * Bülow writes from Berlin telling me of Hülsen's comical fury over "the impertinent success"—as he is reported to have called it—of *Lohengrin*, because it is asked for more often than he is able to give it. He would never have expected such a thing. Johanna is getting married shortly and what is he to do? Every seat is booked for six performances ahead and there are constant fresh orders—it is really quite funny. Probably Mme. Tucek will then have to take Ortrud. * * *

Liszt certainly seems to be profoundly depressed just now and I can see that it is not the vulgarities of Jew journalists * * nor the insignificant happenings at the theatre,² etc., that are to blame for it, but experience of the bare-faced ingratitude, disloyalty and treachery of people to whom he has shown nothing but kindness. It is plain that the man is too noble and imposing a figure for all these little German backwaters. In France they would know how to honour and value a man like that—so good-hearted, so zealous for others and so eminently able. * * * *

395. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

VENICE, 22nd February, 1859.

* * * * I relinquish Germany calmly and coldly, knowing, indeed, that I must do so. As yet I have decided nothing for the future *except* to finish *Tristan*!

¹ This letter of 9 February to Lüttichau was published in *Die Musik*, vol. xx., p. 239 (1906). *Ibid.*, p. 242, Lüttichau's brief refusal of 16 February. Cf. *My Life*, pp. 699, 700.

² The occurrences at the first performance of *The Barber of Bagdad*, by Cornelius, caused Liszt to discontinue his activities as kapellmeister. Cf. his letter to Wagner, 1 January, 1859. Upon a newspaper article which greatly annoyed Liszt, cf. Wagner's letter to his wife, 25 January, 1859.

The Archduke Max has just succeeded in getting the order of expulsion¹ against me suspended forthwith. I shall now see whether I can sketch out the third act here. I shall then probably orchestrate it in Switzerland, not far from you, perhaps at Lucerne, which I liked passably well last summer. I shall very likely spend next winter in Paris—so I think, at least, though not only do I not wish it but have to force myself to consider it. * * *

396. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

VENICE, 23rd February, 1859.

* * * * I have heard from Dresden that the King will on no account alter his decision to offer an amnesty only to those who submit to the examination and verdict of the courts. I was advised to submit to that condition, but after mature consideration and after weighing all the chances I am firmly resolved, once for all, *never* to do so. Nevertheless, in order to neglect no possibility, I recently wrote to the Minister of Justice, asking him to discuss the matter once more with the King. The pretext on which I have decided to act was accidentally suggested to me by my latest experience here. I must give you and the Grand Duke the pleasure of hearing, that upon the representations of the Saxon Government, I was recently to have been banished from this place. I was advised to submit unconditionally, but at the same time to send a medical certificate to the Governor-General petitioning to be allowed to remain a few months longer for urgent reasons of health. That has succeeded momentarily and I am allowed to stay. Well, in my address to the Government refusing to be examined, or even perhaps jailed in Saxony for a couple of months, I base my refusal simply and solely on this same state of health, which, after all, I need only exaggerate a little in order to maintain the chief consideration which influences me to make that refusal. In other respects I submit most humbly to the destiny assigned me, unreservedly confess my guilt and the justice of the proceedings against me, and only pray His Majesty graciously to remit in my case the conditions of the amnesty out of special consideration for my health, which has become so precarious that the doctor strongly advises me not to subject it to this test. In this way I think I have taken the only means of going straight to my goal—namely, certain knowledge of where I stand. Should the King refuse to grant this request, it will be clear that I must for ever give up hope in that quarter. Even in that case I am determined to make one last attempt. I shall then apply direct

¹ See No. 392, note 3, p. 33.

to the Grand Duke of Baden, first informing him of all that has occurred hitherto, and then asking him for his permission to approach the Emperor of Austria, the Prince of Prussia, the Grand Duke of Weimar, the Duke of Coburg, and perhaps one other prince friendly to me, with a petition for a special dispensation allowing residence in their respective states, either by agreement among themselves or by a decree of the Federal Diet. Avoiding any suggestion of a complaint against the King of Saxony, I shall base this request simply on this same circumstance, namely consideration for my grave state of health and the nervous prostration which prevents me from undergoing the chances of legal proceedings in Dresden, whose justice I nevertheless recognise so fully that I in no wise expect the King to alter his decision on my behalf. I shall further ask these princes, as an exceptional act of grace, to suspend in my favour the treaty of extradition by agreement with Saxony, thereby securing my personal efforts for the cultivation of German art. It must, then, depend on the consent of the Grand Duke of Baden as to whether I take further steps on these lines. I do not venture to say that I expect a favourable issue, but I shall gain one advantage, and that is the certainty of my lot, which is now the thing I need most. I must no longer delay in gaining this certainty, for my whole future depends on it. Before telling you what further step¹ I contemplate in order to gain certainty in another quarter also, I will answer your question as to Karlsruhe.

Devrient wrote to me that if I had finished *Tristan* in time, September 6th, being the birthday of the Grand Duke, would be a desirable date for the performance, and that the Grand Duke counted upon my personal presence. As to this last point, which I naturally made a principal condition from the first, I have just received further information. The Grand Duke proposes to invite me to Karlsruhe for the necessary period on his own sole responsibility; there is not to be a word of this beforehand and my presence is simply to be an accomplished fact, for which the Grand Duke will accept personal responsibility. That seems to me truly princely—and this young sovereign has my confidence. * * * *

Well, then! Does the Grand Duke [Karl Alexander² von Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach] hold to his proprietary rights in *The Nibelungs*, based on my undertaking, given in Lucerne, to have the work dedicated to him and produced under his patronage? We shall see. I am very happy now at the prospect of its completion. There is now only one act of *Siegfried* wanting, and I shall make light work

¹ This concerned *The Ring of the Nibelungs*. See No. 397.

² Cf. *My Life*, pp. 660, 662, 665.

of that next winter. What is the Grand Duke prepared to do to earn proprietary rights in this work? * * *

All my transactions with Härtel's as to the publication of the scores, etc., of *The Nibelungs* which should now be got ready, have gone awry again and again. * * * This is where the above-mentioned prince, in whose honour the work is to appear, must come in as patron and arbiter to preserve the work for the worker. Accordingly, I herewith propose to the Grand Duke, through you, that he should immediately take possession of my completed scores. I will make over to him those which are already finished as his absolute property, and pledge myself to do the same with the rest as soon as they are ready. For this the Grand Duke will pay me the same fee on each score as that which Härtel's now pay me for *Tristan*, viz. 300 louis d'or (200 of which in cash I have received, in part, already and am to receive the rest after the delivery of the last act, while 100 are to be paid later out of the profits on the business). * * * *

I will say no more here and now as to the fate I destine for my *Nibelungs* in case the Grand Duke refuses my offer.¹ It is very plain that I should have to pursue some quite new and different course.

Your advice to me to settle permanently in Paris in case Germany remains closed to me, quite accords with my own resolves. * * * *

Believe me, my dear Franz, when I weigh all the advantages which this amnesty I am working for would afford me, the only one which seems to me worth any real sacrifice is that of being able to see and be with *you* more often. * * *

And now, my dear fellow, let me have a fuller account of yourself. I only hear of all your troubles from others—or even from the newspapers. That is not right—and you should not be too brief either; it keeps me at a distance from you. I want a closer view, so that I can tell where to rest the hand which longs to give you a friendly touch. It is natural enough that you should be too great, too noble, too fine for our dear rustic Germany, that you should appear among these people like a god, whose splendour they are not accustomed to or willing to bear, for never before in Germany was such a light- and warmth-giving phenomenon. * * *

397. TO BREITKOPF AND HÄRTEL, LEIPZIG

VENICE, 1 March, 1859.

I hear from Dresden that negotiations are on foot with you for the purchase of the publication rights in my three operas, *Rienzi*, *The Flying Dutchman* and *Tannhäuser*. Although I lost more than

¹ He did refuse; cf. Liszt's letter, 6 April, 1859.

I can say on this unlucky edition, I should be very glad to learn, for the sake of the matter itself, that the sale to you had been effected.¹

In any event, even if this business is not concluded, I have a proposal to make to you, or, more properly, a request. I have completely run out of the issue of the *Tannhäuser* score, which I had autographed at one time. * * *

I should be extremely gratified if you could see your way to having the difficult and intricate score of *Tannhäuser* engraved.² It is of course understood that I should ask no honorarium. However, there should be sufficient profit on the engraved score, after my latest revision of the opera, to prevent at least any loss to the publishers. * * *

Once more, let me add that the score is my own property, that I can dispose of it independently and consequently can place its publication in your hands without causing you to feel in any way obliged to enter into the further publication of the opera. * * *

398. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

VENICE, 2nd March, 1859.

* * * I found the right frame of mind to make a success of the second act. During the last few evenings Ritter and Winterberger have been playing over to me the principal parts, little by little. It was clear then that I had made something beautiful! All my earlier works, poor things, have to give place to this one act! That is how I turn upon myself and ever destroy all my children but one! * * *

399. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BERLIN

VENICE, 8th March, 1859.

* * * At the end of this month I am leaving Venice to seek refuge in Switzerland, for I do not wish to begin my third act until I am secure from the prospect of interruption by having to change my residence. I shall probably go to Lucerne, and perhaps to the Willes, on the lake at Zurich.

I think of fixing my domicile in Paris from next autumn. But it is possible that I shall go to New York for the winter to conduct my operas and procure enough money for a few years to come. If I had not still to consider the last act, I would meet you in Paris now. * * *

¹ It was not.

² Härtel's did so and resigned the publication of the score in favour of Meser, who had succeeded to the rights. Cf. *My Life*, p. 709.

I cannot see my way to make a close ¹ to the [*Tristan*] overture and am sorry, altogether, that I gave you my permission. When I read about the *Faust Overture*, I began to hope you had given up the idea. * * * *

400. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

VENICE, 10th March, 1859.

Yesterday at last I finished my second act with all its many nice (musical) problems, knowing that I have solved them in absolutely original fashion. It is the highest point my art has reached as yet. I must spend one more week over the manuscript and discharge my horrible correspondence. After that I think of gracing Milan and Verona with my presence for a few days on my way, via Como and Lugano, to cross my old St. Gothard. Cheer me with news of yourself before then! * * * *

Yesterday Winterberger, who is going to Rome, took leave of me, weeping and sobbing bitterly. Karl, too, when he left in November was incredibly moved. They are all very fond of me and I almost think there is something about me which they venerate. I am leaving Karl here. He does not like it at all. He dreads my departure. * * * *

401. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

MILAN, 25th March, 1859.

* * Here am I on my travels, without having told you a word about them! * * *

In order to prevent any interruption in the composition of my third act [*Tristan*], I had to decide to begin it in some place where I should be able to finish it. I have chosen Lucerne for the purpose; you know how I love the Lake of Lucerne; the Righi, Pilatus, etc., have become healing necessities to me, to my very blood. I shall be quite alone there, shall easily find an excellent lodging at this time of year, and mean to work splendidly. The Erard has gone on in advance.

I still have much trouble with my health; otherwise things are tolerably well with me. * * *

I should certainly have had news of you long before now if I had not given you such a dose ² in my last letter! * * * *

¹ See No. 393, note 2, p. 34.

² No. 396, about the Grand Duke of Weimar.

402. TO FRAU JULIE RITTER, DRESDEN

LUCERNE, 7th April, 1859.

*** It has startled and concerned me greatly to learn that you are so troubled about Karl. At the same time I was puzzled to know what particular ill you had in mind. He has grown very dear to me and my heart has been perfectly open to him. So, I think, has his to me. He himself could not quite understand how it was he seemed to you unhappy. I think, my dear friend, that you do not judge quite rightly when you suppose that he is *seeking* something, and that this quest makes him discontented with what he has. Give him time and a little independence. I cannot conceal from myself that he also has married too early. Yet whatever disadvantage arises from that can best be allayed if a little freedom of movement is given him now. He is so noble, so pure, so incapable of any hypocrisy or deceit, that you need expect nothing but good of him if you leave him entirely to himself. I do not think a lonely stay in Switzerland with his wife would be good for either of them, and I advised him to settle with her in Dresden by preference. He is so passionately attached now to Italy and its art treasures that I believe a stay in Rome, etc., would have an uncommonly fortunate and inspiring effect on him. If he goes there, you may take comfort in the fact that it is partly upon my advice. He is so discreet and modest that he may well be allowed the satisfaction of such noble tastes. Set your mind quite at ease about him. I expect much from his present work and hope it will soon take him back to Germany, where, by opening an entirely fresh career, he will greatly benefit exteriorly and interiorly. ***

I have a big thing to ask of Emilie, namely to get a copy made of my sketch for *Wieland* and to send it to Frau Caroline Röckel at Weimar. ***

403. TO HIS SISTER, CLARA WOLFRAM, CHEMNITZ

LUCERNE, 7th April, 1859.

*** For the rest, I hope you understood me well enough not to be offended because I asked you last autumn to avoid anything in your dealings with Minna that might excite her. At that time her letters to me were becoming more and more heated and violent, and I could only suppose that the contentious point was being discussed with her far too much. Naturally I realised that it would be difficult, or rather impossible, to evade the subject altogether, and my request to you was not meant in the least as a reproach. But I felt I could not do enough to secure calming influences for her in all quarters.

A heart so utterly restless is, after all, a terrible torment. I am very sorry for her, and as I came to see more and more that it was quite impossible to work upon her by and through the reason, I recognised that the only choice was between treating her with kindly deception, avoiding the difficult subject, exercising a soothing influence, ignoring all that came from her, or—frankly and definitely leaving her to her misery. It will be plain that I could only choose the first. As far as possible I have always gone upon this basis in my letters, sometimes gravely, sometimes jokingly, and the result seems to show that it has gradually advantaged her. I do not let her lack money, plenty of money, for a really pleasant life, and have recently furnished her for the whole summer with means to live in a truly elegant and comfortable style. God grant that all this and the summer cure at Schandau may improve her condition so radically that it will be possible for me to put her in charge of my household next autumn without fear that a fresh relapse into her old state may rob me and her of all further hope!

As to myself, solitude has benefited me remarkably. Previously I often disliked it, but this time it has never oppressed my spirits.
* * * I live only to finish my works. * * *

404. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

LUCERNE, 10th April, 1859.

* * * * The third act [of *Tristan*] is begun. It has become clear to me that I shall never again invent anything new. This spring-time of my powers has brought me such a wealth of buds that for the future I need only turn back to my store and, with a little care, coax them into bloom. Also I feel that this apparently most painful act will not exhaust me so terribly as might have been supposed. The second act prostrated me. In it the towering fires of life burned in me with such unutterable heat and brilliance that they almost scorched and consumed me. Towards the close of the act, as they sank and died and the soft radiance of transfiguring death glowed from the embers, I grew calmer. I will play you this part if you come.—I have good hopes of the end now! * * * *

405. TO THE SAME

[LUCERNE], 15th April [1859].

* * * * However, it occurred to me that it would be injudicious to publish *Tristan* as yet. Between a poem designed for music and a drama which is to be expressed solely in poetry, the differences

in plan and in execution are so radical that the former, regarded with the same eye as the latter, must necessarily fail to reveal its meaning—until it finds its completion in the music. * * * *

406. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

LUCERNE, 18th April, 1859.

* * * * Last autumn Wesendonck informed me of his Guido's death in a very moving letter. I answered him in the same tone, and since then we have been in friendly correspondence from time to time. However, it was not this which decided me to settle in Lucerne; for though I had proposed to the Heims that I should visit them this summer I did not propose to go near Zurich. But then a few days ago I got an invitation from Wesendonck; I was to put up at his house, he would send a carriage to the station to meet me, and he gave me to understand that he intended to put an end to exaggerated and mistaken rumours by this open act of friendly intercourse. So I accepted, travelled to Zurich last Saturday, got into Wesendonck's carriage, slept the night at his house and returned on Sunday afternoon, having gone in W.'s carriage again in the morning to the Zeltweg, and visited the Heims by myself. This was, as we both hope, a very salutary demonstration, and everyone will naturally infer from it how I stand with the family; of course, it has already made a great impression on the servants. He was very cheerful and happy and I, no less, am relieved of a great source of worry. You too, I hope, will draw from this the same conclusions which reassured Wesendonck. Before I leave Switzerland altogether, I am thinking of accepting his further invitation, when a larger party is to be invited.—

I need hardly tell you that this will not make the least difference in my, and our, mutual arrangements for the future. Everything remains as we settled it. Only now everything in the past is clear and bright to me—and to you too, I hope—so that no clouds nor mists remain to be dispelled.— * * * *

407. TO KARL KLINDWORTH, LONDON

LUCERNE, 28th April, 1859.

* * I have to tell you that the American¹ has answered me in the negative. True, he makes me a counter-proposal, which can still be talked and thought over, but this concerns only myself, as he already has a permanent kapellmeister, Anschütz, who is to conduct

¹ The impresario Ullmann had wished to engage Wagner for New York. See No. 391.

other operas along with me, and so could not possibly appoint yet a third. I should be extremely sorry if you should have counted too much on the fulfilment of my wish and should have incurred nothing but disappointment and depression through it!—I myself shall probably give up the whole affair. It reminds me rather too much of London!

I have been here a month in complete solitude and am trying to finish my last act. But I have not got very far with it; the weather is so wretched. I shall remain here probably till the end of June and then go to Paris, where in any case I think of settling down. It is all over for me with Germany. I know no help for it. Also all my negotiations with Härtel's about *The Nibelungs* have broken down again. Don't be angry with me for having urged the work on you. It will not have been in vain, for, when I can attend to the outside world once more, I shall bend my mind to the performance of *The Nibelungs* and carry it through wheresoever—and good success shall then reward us both.

For the present, I long only for the completion of *Tristan*! After that I shall have an easier mind. I think you can send the *Siegfried* sketches without anxiety * * to Lucerne. * * *

408. TO FRANZ LISZT, STAYING AT LÖWENBERG IN SILESIA

LUCERNE, 8th May, 1859.

* * * Ah, how full of enthusiasm I am for the German Confederacy of the Teutonic Nation! God forbid that the villain Louis Napoleon should lay hands on my German Confederacy—I should be too distressed if any changes were made in it. I am curious as to what will become of my projected migration to Paris. Of course it is terribly unpatriotic to want to make oneself comfortable in the headquarters of the enemy of the German Nation. The good Germans should really do something to save the most Germanic of all Germanic opera-composers from this dreadful trial. Moreover, in Paris, I may find myself nicely cut off from all my German resources; and yet I shall have to apply to a very high quarter¹ in Paris to get permission to settle there permanently, for my stay² in Switzerland is drawing to a close. Germany evidently intends forcibly to drive me to the enemy! Very well, then!! However, there is now a possibility that I may go in the autumn for six months to America,³ where offers have been made which I cannot well neglect in view

¹ Louis Napoleon himself?

² Wagner wished to stay in Switzerland only till *Tristan* was finished, for he had too few opportunities there to hear operas and orchestral concerts.

³ See Nos. 391, 407.

of the kind of sympathy I get from the German Confederacy. This will have to be decided soon. What makes me hesitate, is the fact that it would interfere with the *Tristan* scheme at Karlsruhe in such a manner that I should ultimately have to give it up for the present and then probably never resume it. I am on the very verge of the "to be or not to be" with the last act of this child of sorrow—and the mere brush of a feather of that vulgar Chance of whom I am the helpless victim, might kill the child in the very throes of birth. Everything hangs by a hair with me now; it may go, or it may stand stock-still. For, my Franz, things go ill with me! * * * *

* * * And now at length I come to *Dante*, which I did not want to mention at all to-day as I love it too much to involve it in my present mood. Yet let me say this much, that we will keep the words of the dedication¹ inscribed in my copy, strictly to ourselves; not a soul shall know of them from me, at least. Believe me, you have positively made me blush for shame! I cannot tell you forcibly enough how miserably feeble I feel as a musician. From the bottom of my heart I consider myself an absolute bungler. You ought to see me sitting there sometimes thinking "it must do after all"—then going to the piano to wrestle with some wretched rubbish and giving it up in a condition of idiocy. My feelings then!—my innermost conviction of actual musical beggary! And then *you* come along, exuding music at every pore—in streams—in springs—in waterfalls—and I have to listen while you say things like this! I find it hard to believe that it is not sheer irony, and I have to recall your friendship for me very clearly and thoroughly to persuade myself that you have not been laughing at me.—It is a queer story, dearest friend, and believe me, there is not much in me. I really believe now that Reissiger² must have helped me to do *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*. You most certainly helped me with my later works and now that you leave me in the lurch I can do no more.

Only this much about *Dante* to-day, that I am chiefly delighted to see how perfectly I have remembered it from your first playing of it. As I study it more closely, I see that no single matter of importance has escaped me, and indeed even the least and minutest details were perfectly familiar to me from that time. This is at least good evidence of my receptive capacity; yet I believe the credit is due to the original greatness and quality of your work.

For the rest, if I am to try to say something more to you about

¹ "As Virgil led Dante, so hast thou led me through the secret realms of the living world of music. With a heartfelt cry to thee, '*Tu se lo mio maestro e il mio autore,*' this work is dedicated to thee in unchanging loyalty and love by Thy F. Liszt.—Easter [24 April], '59."

² So little did Wagner think of these operas at this time!

it, I feel just as I felt when I wrote a letter to Marie about you.¹ Concerning that letter I recently made a brand-new discovery. Karl Ritter had not read it, when I fortunately found it among my papers in Venice and gave it to him. Afterwards he came to me and told me that he had heard from people quite closely connected with you that I had expressed myself very evasively and had taken pains to avoid saying anything very definite about you. This had made him uneasy and now, having read it, he was correspondingly delighted to perceive the *enormous* importance I attributed to you. Amazed at the possibility of an evil interpretation, I re-read my letter at once and could not but concur with Karl's hot declamations upon the incredible dullness, shallowness and triviality of the people who could have misunderstood the meaning of this letter. Now, however, I have taken oath *never* to publish *another word*. We know what we are to each other and can communicate with each other occasionally for encouragement and consolation; but what we are to the world I'm ——!

It is *too* incredible!!

For the present, all the good-humour I can raise I lavish on my wife! I coax her and pamper her as if she were a honeymoon bride. My reward is to know that she is doing well. Her bad condition visibly improves; she is recovering and it is to be hoped will acquire a little sense as well in her old age—so that just after receiving your *Dante* I wrote to her that we had now got through Hell, I hoped Purgatory would agree with her, and that at last a little Paradise must surely come our way. All that is excellent. * * *

409. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

LUCERNE, 12th May, 1859.

* * * * Heavens! the weather cleared up yesterday so beautifully that I really took some joy in life again. I had a lot to see and enjoy in a three hours' ramble such as one can only get in this glorious district.

I sat down near a mill by the stream, to cool down before I could take a drink, and fell into just the right mood for looking at things. Inside the mill-wheels clattered, outside cackled the hens, and pigeons sought food amongst them; on a small wain heaped with straw, the sparrows hopped about looking for grains of corn; I could hear the ox in his stall and wondered if anything was lacking to complete the scene? Aha! out through the door came the cat, seated

¹ "On the Symphonic Poems of Franz Liszt," addressed to Princess Marie Wittgenstein, 15 February, 1857 (*Gesammelte Werke*, vol. v.).

herself on the step, washed herself and watched the birds. At last a little maid came out to draw water and behind her bounded a huge dog, which did not touch me. Then I thought to myself, "Yes, *real* country life like this might suit me for a change. I like to be with animals, and that not merely superficially. They always furnish one with little cares and innocent joys to give each day its interest; and then one learns to know each animal personally, they depend on us and that flatters us."—After that I went over the hill and through the wood, full of heavenly bird-song, and I kept on thinking I heard a new one. But it was glorious in the meadow. I had never heard such lovely tinkling of bells. Almost every cow had a big fine-toned metal bell, on which the people here seem to spend a lot. When I stood among them, the volume of sound was magnificent; and the cattle are so friendly they all come up and gaze at one inquisitively. For a long time I heard those lovely bells in the farthest distance. Yes, and even at night I heard them from my perch away across the lake, for the cows stay out in the meadows all night.

If I could have my wish, I should like to live in Paris for the winter, but in the summer we should be able to live a real homely country life like this in Switzerland, perhaps in Brunnen,¹ after all. I won't give up the idea entirely and shall discuss the plan again with Aufdermauer. America, America, *you* must help! Money will do anything, you know!— * * * *

410. TO THE SAME

LUCERNE, 18th May, 1859.

* * * * As I wished to give people an idea of how my works² arose, and consequently of my psychological development, I could not, without being unintelligible, pass over in silence such a critical and momentous change in my life as was constituted by our marriage. It would have been foolish, and contrary to my true intention, to have attempted to tell this particular episode, our love-story, more fully and at greater length, but it was just necessary to indicate with a few light strokes an incident of considerable importance, such as, for that matter, occurs in the lives of many, indeed of most, people and need only be briefly touched upon because it is presupposed that everyone will know well enough what

¹ As early as 1856 Wagner had wished to settle at Brunnen on Lake Lucerne, a place he loved very much. Cf. *My Life*, p. 647, and a letter to his wife of 18 July, 1856.

² In the "Communication to my Friends," written in 1851 and first published as preface to *Three Operatic Poems* (*Gesammelte Werke*, vol. iv.).

is meant—to wit, the inevitable consequences of a youthful marriage, contracted in the urgency of passion without reflection and consideration for practical issues, in spite of the obstacles and objections raised by practical common sense which sees trouble ahead.

The fact that you cannot get it out of your head that my intention was to expose you and even accuse you, seems to me something so insensate and radically perverse that up to now I have scarcely ventured to reply to you on the point, being at a loss how to explain to you something so simple and obvious that I still hope that no one *else* will misunderstand (with the possible exception of persons of Schiffner's level of intelligence and so on, for whom, in any case, I did not write the book).

Certainly I bitterly regret now that this *Preface* was printed at the time it was, for it was written far above the heads of the majority of readers who could only half-understand it. I also regret that in the whole of this *Preface* you are still oblivious to all but this one passage, and could almost wish I had used the occasion to write a full account of my life in which I might have been able to present you before the eyes of the world with a handsome testimonial to your loyalty and self-sacrifice. If, however, you grasped the whole thing, you would see that it never occurred to me to write a biography (a thing which I should have thought really absurd and in bad taste—particularly as a commendation of my wife—), but that, on the contrary, I only touched briefly on such things in my life as seemed to me necessary to display the whole course of my purely artistic development. Should anyone in the future speak of this passage to you in a hushed whisper, just laugh in his face and say, "Well, truth to tell, he was so absurd and danced attendance on me so jealously! And then he insisted on getting married in case anyone else should come near me, although we were so poverty-stricken and in such difficulties that my calmer judgment told me in advance what miseries were before us. But what was I to do? I loved him too, and so we pair of children fell into a state of destitution which soon became so dreadful and distressing that I, for my part, felt I could endure it no longer; and because my thoughtless hot-headed young husband, loaded with debts and with the prospect of an unemployed summer before us, plagued me in addition with violent outbursts of unendurable jealousy, one day I ran away!"—You might answer thus, my dear child, in full accordance with the truth, and you would be explaining the passage correctly. But I presume that only a stupid person would put you in the position of having to make such an answer, for anyone of intelligence would understand the passage of himself and not force you to a declaration

which, after all, must throw more doubt on your love for me than on mine for you. For a really intelligent person would answer your reply with, "So you could run off like that, then, from your young inexperienced husband, leaving him in the difficulties in which *he* was involved as well as you? According to that, perhaps you did not really love him?—For a woman who truly loves her husband and cannot help but love him, may, no doubt, feel very unhappy and injured by his outbursts, but as soon as her simple instinct to love him tells her, as it must, that these outbursts spring from nothing but the passion of love (for you know that men have been known to murder the beloved out of passionate love and jealousy!) and, furthermore, that the unhappiness and hardships in which you left him, were only the consequences of the imprudence with which he insisted on marriage when it would have been better to wait for a more favourable season and really sprang from his intense affection for you—it would then be impossible for her to leave him, for that very misery must, at bottom, have borne witness to her of his uncommonly strong devotion."—As a matter of fact, dear child, many would answer you so, and, as you are so excessively fond of indulging in these old reminiscences, I will simply tell you that at the time itself—actually then—a certain man of calm judgment, intelligence and deep feeling gave me this very aspect of the matter to think of, when *I*, accusing myself to excuse you and to reconcile him to your conduct, gave *him* the explanation which I have written above and put into your mouth for your future use! You know this man very well and cannot have much against him, I think; it was Hermann Brockhaus whose letter of that period I came upon again recently.—However, should you ever be met with this serious reply you could, without injury to your honour, answer somewhat as follows.—"It is true that in those difficult days my love for Richard had faded, but still I do not think things would have gone so far if a man of wealth and position had not approached me at the time with great show of heartfelt sympathy for my sufferings and expressed that sympathy in so alluring a fashion that amidst all these conflicting impressions ¹ I wavered for a while and could no longer see in Richard's love for me (particularly as it expressed itself solely in such insulting outbursts that I could scarcely recognise it for what it was) any sufficient compensation for the wretchedness which an unfortunate, headlong, untimely marriage had brought upon us both. Yes, I have to blame myself that all this made me uncertain of myself for a time; and anyone who weighs the matter well will be able to forgive the young wife for yielding to temptation, at first

¹ Cf. *My Life*, pp. 169–76.

to the point of keeping her husband at a distance, treating him with hostility and misleading him as to her actions, while she wavered so in her choice between him and another, that that other, unhappily, could make it appear that I had shown him more favour than was really the case. But it was this very situation which proved me, and *in it* I first became fully convinced of my love for Richard, the fruit which finally emerged from this regrettable misunderstanding. At the very moment that the decision had to be made, I saw plainly how dear Richard was to me, so that when he would have had to abandon me altogether and go off to a post in far-away Riga, I prevailed on myself to confess my fault and ask pardon, telling him at the same time that nothing but my new realisation of my great love for him could have moved me to do it. Meanwhile Richard, too, had much to get over, and in particular his love for me had been put to a severe test. Appearances had made him suspect, nay believe, that I had betrayed him utterly and given myself to another. Newspapers had been sent to him from Hamburg in which he read that I had been staying at *the same* hotel with that other. What could the poor fellow believe except the worst? Indeed, he had received letters taunting him outright with my behaviour, and even his fellow-workers at the theatre made covert or open insinuations, ridiculing him as a cheated husband. But he stood the test, and it proved that the first violent headstrong passion had given place to a true and earnest love. He answered me at once, with devotion, forgave me all, called me to him and never under the sorest temptations which arose later did he ever speak of my lapse with anyone. So then, love, loyalty and faith had made their home with us and the trials of youth were past, even though the hard trials of later life still lay ahead of us. Richard's peculiar nature, which on the one hand qualified him to do great work and finally to attain extraordinary success, could not but be the cause of certain dark shadows upon our life on the other. I am not thinking of the continual want and trouble in practical matters, though these taxed my strength very sorely; but inevitably his highly artistic temperament and the peculiarly emotional and intense quality of his works, kept him in an excitable state which, through his works, he imparted to others and many a time this disturbed my own peace of mind. A fine artist like Richard, constantly at work in a passionate medium, retains through life a certain boyishness which must often trouble the wife at his side; for while this wife is constantly beside him in the small world of home, like an old possession sometimes hardly noticed just because one is so sure of it and accustomed to it, new figures must often appear from the world outside, creating

an effect calling for forbearance from the anxious wife. Fortunately, at the time of his becoming actually famous, he was cut off from the world and I was thus, perhaps, spared many an anxiety. Still, I was not without my painful experiences which affected me all the more acutely because the constant want and unrest in which we had lived had unfortunately affected my health and made me extremely sensitive, mentally and physically. On the other hand, I have made the comforting and joyful discovery that, when things were at their worst and suffering overwhelmed me, I could once more rely on Richard's showing his utmost faith and devotion, justifying me in the conclusion that he returns my faith and love with all his heart and that, in the last resort, he would put up with anything, renounce anything for the sake of comforting me and being a good husband to me to the best of his power.—So that is how it is with us—and now ask me no more questions!”

I believe that this answer would be a thoroughly truthful and circumspect one and that, having made it, you could bear yourself proudly and tranquilly. I am not angry with you for having placed me in the position of having to prescribe it to you, but I beg you to take to heart this plain and candid review of our relationship as my answer to *your* repeated accusations, and to adopt what is contained therein as your own—a thing you surely cannot find repugnant or difficult. * * * *

4II. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

LUCERNE, 21st May, 1859.

I must tell you at once about a really funny discovery that I have just made. It has suddenly occurred to me that all my anguish over my work is the result of hypochondria. Everything which I have sketched out seems to me so horribly bad that I lose all eagerness and want to go no farther. To-day I forced myself to make a fair copy of a passage from my rough draft, which recently displeased me so much that I thought I should have to rewrite it entirely. However, no improvement occurred to me and I was so unhappy about it that I thought of giving up altogether, etc. Well, at last, in despair, I make a fair copy of the passage to-day, leaving it exactly as in the sketch, except for a few unimportant details of correction. I play it over to myself and—discover that it is so good that I *could* make nothing better!—Isn't that laughable? And yet it is a bad state of things, for this hypochondria, which is growing upon me, is a proof that all is not as it should be. I just cannot bring myself to put feeling and warmth into working up my rough sketches. * * * *

412. TO THE SAME

LUCERNE, 23rd May, 1859.

* * * * Besides you, Liszt has congratulated me,¹ by telegraph, too, so I immediately telegraphed my thanks to him. Apart from this, one of my hopes has been annihilated. You know that I hoped Karl Ritter would not be able to find it in his heart to leave me without a greeting for this day, and I thought I should then have heard something of my lost property² as well. Nothing has come, however, and I am really troubled. Clearly he does not wish to compromise me in the eyes of his family. I was more fortunate with Frau Ritter (his mother), from whom I found a letter awaiting me on my last return home, which showed me that I had succeeded in enlightening and, to some extent—even in reassuring her.³ Curious—in answer to certain remarks of mine she replied, “Dear Karl often acts so rashly. When he suddenly decided on one of the most important steps⁴ in his life, all my plea was that he should give himself time and not make a binding promise in such a hurry, but in vain!”

O Fate!

Who is right and who wrong in this world? What a wild confusion it is of likes and dislikes, desire and abhorrence! A man wants stability in his life and sooner or later sets up a boundary post—thus far and no farther—no more changes! And he sets up the post where he supposes that his desire will abide—but it abides not, and what then?

Wer ist denn glücklich? ⁵

That, then, is the best comfort—to be able to answer at once:

Wer redlichkeit übt,⁶

or if you like:

die Trommel gerührt
das Pfeifchen gespielt.⁷

Do you think I am mad??

No doubt I shall become a little cracked in time. Rarely can any man have lived so much from day to day as I do. Any plan I may form, crumbles the moment I look straight at it—nothing stands

¹ Birthday greetings.

² See No. 413.

³ See No. 402. Four letters addressed by Wagner to Karl Ritter in Venice, after the latter's probable departure, had remained unanswered; cf. Wagner to Julie Ritter, 6 May, 1859. In 1858 Ritter had separated from his wife.

⁴ Marriage.

⁵ “Who, then, is happy?” (TRANS.)

⁶ “He who does honestly.” (TRANS.)

⁷ From Goethe's *Egmont*, Act I., which Wagner was reading at the time.

“The drum is rolled,
The fife is played.”

firm. I have positively no idea where I shall find a roof to my head in a month's time and plans are of no use. I abandon myself now with true fatalism to chance. I started a course of Kissingen waters yesterday and I allow myself to do as I like, particularly in the matter of work. Day after day I look at the weather and see that it is going to rain; neglect to answer Härtel's, who are dunning me for "manuscript"(!); order children's lollypops and gingerbread-men and think, "He who submits to God's decree——"! In this way I find things are not so bad and I simply await a miracle; who knows, perhaps one may happen!—Really it is not worth the trouble to torment oneself. After all, the best things come to one "unerbeten, unerfleht—am willigsten,"¹ like sleep to Egmont.

See, I could go on chattering away with you hour after hour if only Wesendonck would not start a discussion of this or the other point and so make the chatter something rather more precise.—It is a warm day to-day. Heavens, how lovely that is! Well, then, a man can go lightly clad—nay, but that ought not to be, for it is better when it is cold and one can go warmly wrapped against it! Here at once is matter for a little argument!

Still no news of my trunk from Venice. Ultimately I shall cease to care even about that—even if *Siegfried* is lost. At best I can do nothing but worry myself intensely to no purpose! On the other hand, I've made another new discovery with regard to *Parzival* even though I have not read your book² yet. Otherwise I read nothing at all. * * *

413. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, ZURICH

LUCERNE, 26th May, 1859.

* * * * To-day, quite unexpectedly, my long-awaited box arrived safely from Venice, putting me in a really good humour and confirming my belief that all pleasure is merely negative—for if things had followed the ordinary proper course this box would never have seemed anything special to me, whereas now all its contents, particularly the sketches which I had almost given up for lost, come to me like a new gift. I have now a complete library in my *salon*. * * * *

414. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

LUCERNE, 29th May, 1859.

* * * * Karl Ritter had written to me³ after all, only his letter was delayed in the post. That made me very glad. He has taken

¹ "Unprayed for, unimplored—most willingly." (TRANS.)

² "*Parzival*. A Knightly Poem by Wolfram von Eschenbach, translated by San Marte" (2nd edition, Leipzig, 1858).

³ See No. 412.

root in Rome, met Winterberger in front of St. Peter's, has fallen in love with the shallow cupola of the Pantheon and writes to me of all his interesting experiences with desperate *naïveté*! He is and remains a very original person. He did not write to me for a while, not from any idea of not compromising me with his people, but simply because he thought I got too many letters already and did not want to be a burden to me. I have given him a piece of my mind on that head!

30th May, 1859.

* * * * I am now engaged in working out the first half of my act. It always takes me a long time to get through the tragic passages; at best I can only do very little of these at a time. The vigorous, lively, fiery parts go incomparably quicker. So, even in the technical working out, I live it all, "sorrowful and joyful,"¹ and am utterly immersed in my subject. This last act is a regular intermittent fever—the deepest, most unutterable suffering and longing alternating abruptly with inexpressible jubilation and triumph. God knows, no one has ever taken the matter so seriously before, and *Semper* is quite right.² This it is that has turned me against *Parzival* just recently. Briefly, it has dawned on me again what a truly terrible piece of work this would be. Looked at closely, it will be seen that Amfortas is the central point, the main theme. It is rather a nice story, that! Think, in Heaven's name, what it all involves! It has suddenly become terribly clear to me; it is my *Tristan* of the third act inconceivably intensified. With the spear-wound, and perhaps another—in the heart—the sufferer, in his terrible anguish, knows only one desire—to die. To win this supreme comfort, he longs ever and again for the vision of the Grail—if only to close the wound, for naught, naught else avails. But the Grail, ever and again, gives him but the one gift—that of being *unable* to die; the Vision only multiplies his sufferings by giving them immortality. The Grail, as I interpret it, is the Cup of the Last Supper into which Joseph of Arimathea received the Blood of the Saviour upon the cross. If so, what a fearful significance the relation of Amfortas to this miraculous Cup acquires! Wounded by the spear of a rival in a passionate love adventure, his one hope of healing is in the blessing of that Blood which once flowed from a like wound in the Saviour's side when, world-renouncing, world-redeeming, world-enduring, He languished upon the cross! Blood for blood and wound for wound, but what a gulf divides this blood and that, this wound and that! All rapture, all devotion, all ecstasy at the

¹ Goethe's *Egmont*, Act III.

² Cf. *My Life*, p. 670.

miraculous nearness of the Cup, glowing in its soft and blessed radiance, he draws new life from it—and death cannot come near him! He lives, lives anew, and more terribly than ever the unhallowed wound burns in him—*his* wound! His very devotion becomes a torment! What can end it, where is salvation? Mortal suffering to all eternity! Will he, in the madness of despair, turn utterly away from the Grail, close his eyes against it? He would like to do this and die. But—he himself was made guardian of the Grail, and by no mere blind exterior power. No! It was because he was worthy, because none like him knew the innermost depths of the marvel of the Grail which still and ever draws his whole soul again and again to the Vision—divine salvation guarded by eternal damnation!

And am I to carry out such a work?—actually make music for it? I thank you! Let him do it who will; *I* shall most politely decline to bow my shoulders to the burden!

Let someone do it who will work *à la* Wolfram. That would do no one any harm, and in the end would sound like something—even something quite pretty. But I take such things far too seriously. * * * Wolfram is a thoroughly crude phenomenon and probably his barbarous, confused period, swaying between the old Christendom and the new Nationalism, is very largely to blame. In that age nothing could come to perfection; profundity in the poet was instantly lost in unreal fantasy. I now almost agree with Frederick the Great who, on being presented with Wolfram's works, said to the publisher that he might spare him such stuff! ¹ The truth is that one must have spiritually reanimated the underlying verities of the saga, as I have done now with the Grail legend, and then just rapidly glance over its presentation by such a poet as Wolfram * * in order to get the full shock of the poet's incapacity. (I even felt the same about Gottfried von Strasburg in the matter of *Tristan*.) * * * What a work I should have of it with Parzival, then! For with *him* Wolfram was helpless; his despair of God is foolish and unmeaning and his conversion is still less satisfying. The business of the "Question" is quite tasteless and altogether meaningless. Therefore I should have to invent absolutely everything. And moreover Parzival is another difficulty. He is indispensably necessary as the saviour of Amfortas, but if Amfortas is to be set in his true and

¹ Can the remark of Frederick the Great's be traced? Has not Wagner perhaps confused it with the King's disapproving verdict on the *Nibelungenlied*? Cf. K. Goedeke's *Grundriss der Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung*, vol. i., p. 184 (2nd edition, Dresden, 1884): "Such poems are not worth a pin; he would not have the book in his library but would have it thrown out." In 1784 an edition of Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* was published by C. H. Myller.

appropriate light, he becomes of such immense tragic interest that it would be more than difficult to introduce a rival main interest—and yet this must centre in Parzival if he is not ultimately to appear a mere cold *deus ex machina*. Consequently Parzival's development, his sublime purification, predestined as it is by everything in his thoughtful, deeply sympathetic nature, must take the foremost place. For this purpose I cannot choose a broad scheme of treatment such as Wolfram had at disposal. I must compress the whole into three principal dramatic situations of intensive import, in such a way that the theme, at once profound and ramified, shall emerge clearly and distinctly; this way of working, this type of representation, is precisely *my* art. And now—am I to undertake such a task? God forbid! This very day I bid farewell to the mad project. Let Geibel write it and Liszt compose it! When my long-loved Brynhilde leaps into the funeral pyre, I shall leap with her and hope for a blessed end! So be it. Amen! * * * *

415. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

LUCERNE, 30th May, 1859.

* * * * How my letter ¹ could *insult* you, I simply cannot understand! Do bethink yourself in the first place that there can never be any question of *insult* between people united by real love, and wherever it seems to be so, it can only mean that confusion and misunderstanding have entered in.—Even when I was at Venice you made cutting remarks about the passage in my *Preface* ² which offends you so. I smiled at them because I could see that blind passion had caused you to misunderstand that passage. * * * I cannot be altogether angry at your retaliating by thrusting that dear Bordeaux ³ under my nose, particularly as you have been keeping a secret from me of which I learned with amazement. Someone wrote to you at that time, then, and told you I had come a second time to Bordeaux to abduct a young wife from her husband?? Now let me swear to you by my honour and most sacred conscience that never was there such a *shameless lie and calumny* invented against any man. If it would enlighten you and conduce to your honour and peace of mind, I would gladly some time give you the whole story in detail and you would then find that I no doubt acted very *foolishly* at the time but assuredly not *wickedly*—not to *anyone*. Believe me in this! And don't turn your hair grey over my sins—I am seeing to that already, poor piebald horse that I am! * * * *

¹ No. 410.

² See No. 410, note 2, p. 47.

³ Wagner's relations with Jessie Laussot.

416. TO BREITKOPF AND HÄRTEL, LEIPZIG

LUCERNE, 5th June, 1859.

**** I am sorry to say that I cannot prevent the publishing of my earlier operas by the present agent. He offered more ¹ than you were able to do (a thing I perfectly understand), and this made it out of the question for me, in the circumstances known to you, to dispose of them otherwise. You may imagine that it was a blow to me to know that the business was not to be put into your hands. As regards the score of *Tannhäuser*, I have given Müller the option of procuring his copies in future through you, or—if he is absolutely determined to publish the score as well—to come to an agreement with you about taking over this publication, a thing that may quite naturally suit you, as this costly publication would mean nothing but a loss to you at the moment and a further debt of gratitude due from me. Nevertheless, I am inclined to think that he will reject the latter suggestion, in spite of the fact that he would like to make an appearance ² with something imposing. ****

417. TO KARL KLINDWORTH, LONDON

LUCERNE, 18th June, 1859.

**** I have heard nothing further from America³; everything seems to fade like smoke. I hope Fate means to spare me the calamity into which I should otherwise probably have been lured by desire of gain.

Some time ago I began work again. Before autumn I shall slowly finish *Tristan*. You will be amazed at this score some day. I tentatively fix the performance in Karlsruhe in October, November or December. I promise myself that this work will make a great impression and hope it may help towards the success of my *Nibelungs*. ****

418. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

LUCERNE, 9th July, 1859.

**** No one bothers his head about me and this is beginning to put me into a really good temper. Heavens! what an incredible amount one can do without! The one thing I forgo very unwillingly is your society, my child; I know no one at all to whom I so love to communicate my thoughts. That is never possible between men; however great the friendship they never want to step outside themselves, but to assert themselves and let themselves be as little

¹ That is to say to Wagner's creditors to whom he had pledged the profits on the forced sale of *Rienzi*, *The Flying Dutchman* and *Tannhäuser*.

² See No. 397, note 2.

³ See No. 391.

encroached upon as possible. It just *is* so—the man lives his own life. But when I think how many good things you have enticed out of me, it can only be an added joy to me that you acted so uncalculatingly and yet always got the best from me. How glad I am that I introduced you to the S. Bach piece¹ the other day! It never gave even me so much pleasure, and I never felt it so intimately. But such a thing never occurs to me when I am alone. When Liszt and I made music together it was different; it was *mere* music; technique and æsthetics always played a great part. There is always a rub somewhere, between men. I seemed stupid to you, perhaps, at our last meeting in Lucerne, and yet our meeting bore noble fruit in me; you can see that at this moment in my steady mood for work. Ought I not to be grateful to you? And that, indeed, as a true friend? * * * *

That Köppen's book [*The Religion of Buddha*] has pleased you so, shows me how good a reader you are. I was annoyed by much in the book, because it made me think all the time how hard the pure knowledge of Buddha's teaching must be made for others. Well, it is a good thing that you were not perplexed. Yes, child, there you have a vision of the universe compared to which every other dogma must seem petty and *borné*! The philosopher with his most sweeping speculations, the scientist with his most far-reaching inferences, the artist with his most extravagant fantasies, the man with the biggest heart for all that breathes and suffers—all find ample room, all find their fullest selves in this marvellous, this incomparable world-myth.

Tell me, while *you* lingered there, how did our splendid modern European world strike you? Do you not find in it, either the roughest barbarism, or the first barbarous beginnings of a development brought to perfect bloom ages since by that noble primitive people? Railways—State-made morality! Ha! ha!—

My sole defence, as a rule, from the repulsiveness of our present period is a refreshing draught from that holy source of the Ganges; one sip and the whole outer world shrinks to the importance of a busy ant-heap. The universe is within, deep in the soul—not there, without, where madness bears full sway.—So be it. And so even Köppen has done you no harm! * * * *

419. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

LUCERNE, 25th July, 1859.

* * * I will write to Moudon² about Natalie. On the whole I am bound to agree with you; nevertheless the plan has many draw-

¹ Which piece of Bach's work is meant is unknown.

² To the College of Governesses there. See also No. 431.

backs. I am afraid Natalie is too old now for this project. One does not begin to go to school at her age, and that is what it comes to. What a terrible pity it is! Childless as we are, she should be just the person to look after you, keep you company, look after the house, etc. It would be the very best thing for her and for you! Yet I am bound to see that you have reason to doubt her suitability afresh; I—have nothing to advance to the contrary, and must think you right to avoid further unfriendly relations. So, if you have been otherwise satisfied with her of late and she has been useful to you, I will gladly show her my gratitude and—although I still cannot hope for very much from it—I am willing to do what I can to forward her wish to train herself for teaching, late as it is.— * * * *

It is really the most—singular thing that I am told again and again of the King's remark that he cannot pardon me if I do not present myself. As if I had not explained most definitely to the Minister—as formerly to Lüttichau—how impracticable, impossible and inadvisable it would be to expect me after fully ten years to undergo examination about matters, which are only faint shadows now in my memory, and of which I could, in many instances, only give a very misty account with the best will in the world. Silence is naturally the only possible answer to such a proposition. One might as well speak to the wind; they simply come back and back to the same old phrase. I don't know how to deal with such people. Besides, their whole behaviour to me is so humiliating that all I ask is to be excused from further dealings with them. Many have had to repent of their stubbornness recently and others' turn may yet come. If I cannot improve my position *in spite of* these small-minded gentry, I suppose I shall just have to submit to it, and can safely leave my fate to the judgment of posterity. Best of all, my spirit is not broken yet, and a very little encouragement can revitalise me, ever and again. Under pressure of the most untoward and forlorn circumstances, I have finished another new work which will bring me honour and renown. I have already *two* more works in my head—apart from the *Nibelungs*—and if I spoke of a break in my work for the present, it arises not for lack of matter but because I do not want to overdo myself and I need recreation, not inspiration. Between now and November I could quite well complete the last act of *Siegfried*, and that would be the *fourth* big work polished off within six years. Anyone comparing my present works with those of others, will be bound to confess that such mental productivity is almost incomprehensible.—Thus equipped, then, I can mock my fate and be content to leave the King of Saxony to think what he likes of me! It will do me no harm.— * * * *

420. TO PRINCESS MARIE WITTGENSTEIN, WEIMAR

LUCERNE, 8th August, 1859.

* * Yesterday I finished the score of *Tristan*. I have deliberately reserved the pleasure of writing to you till the moment which closes this important period of my life.

Shall I try to arouse memories in you? I look back. In the autumn of 1853, you—a thoughtful, maidenly, noble, compassionate child—first brought your compelling loveliness into my life. Do you remember the Paris journey? It was a divine banquet of the dearest friendship, and you were the mistress of the feast. Do you imagine that this could have passed, leaving no trace on my poor life? When I returned from that journey I began to compose again after six years of utter musical barrenness. It is not quite six years since then. During this time I have been repeatedly hindered in carrying out my projects, and I can count three intervals of three months each in which I could not write a single note. Nevertheless, I have finished *The Rhinegold*, *The Valkyrie*, most of *Siegfried*, and now *Tristan and Isolde*. I cannot tell what the general verdict on these works may be; but they will certainly be reproached with being too full, too continuously charged with wealth of subject-matter, too persistent in the unvarying powerful expression of burning passion, of profound meanings. It will be clear at a glance that these scores are far richer, more delicately woven, more lavishly equipped than all my earlier scores put together. And these four works I began to create—from the moment of my return from our Paris journey! Do you think I would assign no share in them to you? Indeed, some marvellous blessing must have lain upon me to enable me, in these years of grief, of self-denial, of manifold sufferings of all kinds, to create what one who knew nothing of my life would probably deem a harvest from the rich tilth of a harmonious existence.

You know that it is otherwise. But you also know what helped me. You know what flowers grew on the dry stony steeps of my life; few they were and sparse, but miracle-flowers blooming there alone, unsown, not found in the most luxuriant fairy-gardens of the tropics.

So think of our Paris journey and—may you bloom sweet and fair, dear flower of Heaven! * * * *

421. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

LUCERNE, 16th August, 1859.

* * * * A certain Herr Séroff, who was at the first two performances of *Lohengrin*, has come to Lucerne expressly to see me.

¹ In October she was married to Prince Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, later Bavarian Prime Minister and Chancellor of the German Empire.

His accounts (he is a connoisseur and very intelligent) agree very largely with yours. He is enchanted with Tichatschek and Mitterwurzer, but he will not hear of Mme. Ney—she fits the part of Elsa as the fist fits the eye—she looks coarse and common—she has a peculiar malicious look all the time and her acting is ridiculous. Dearest Minna, this accords only too well with my own acquaintance with this singer, and even through your praise of her performance, I can see how you are forcing yourself—for good reasons—to overlook much that is offensive. Accordingly I feel that Dresden has failed to give me an Elsa, and that means a great deal. As to the orchestra, Séroff tells me that the wind were excellent but that the strings played flat and without spirit. That agrees with what Dräseke also told me about the present standard of the orchestra. The tempi are said to have frequently been very false, and the cuts I have been told of, such as that at the close of Act I. and in the duet in Act III., are so stupid, outrageous and fatal that I find it difficult as yet to write to Tichatschek, for I should not like to repay his otherwise fine performance by promptly scolding him for approving such cuts, or perhaps even suggesting them. What you write about Mitterwurzer has really done me good, for I consider him the most really talented and the nearest to me of all the singers I know. * * * *

422. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, ZURICH

LUCERNE, 24th August, 1859.

For God's sake, best of friends, don't take offence if I beg you urgently to take back herewith the money offered me.

I cannot in honour accept any loan, for I know my situation and my mind—which probably will not alter.

But still less may I accept a gift, and this, be assured, from *no one*—not simply not from you, whom I already have to thank for such considerable sacrifices. * * *

423. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

LUCERNE, 24th August, 1859.

But, child, what has put it into your head to want to think me—or wish me—a “sage”? Surely I am the most nonsensical person one can well imagine! Judged by the measure of the sage, I must seem frankly criminal, and for the very reason that I know so much and so many things, and know, in particular, that wisdom is so desirable and so excellent a thing. And yet it is that which gives me the humour which carries me over abysses of which the wisest sage is not so much as aware. That makes me a poet and—what is much

worse—a musician. Just consider my music, with its delicate, delicate, secretly flowing sap, penetrating through the subtlest pores of perception to the very marrow of life, there overpowering conscious pride, the carefully constructed fortifications of the self, sweeping away all that belongs to the mirage of personality, leaving nothing but the marvellous exaltation of avowed impotency. How can I be a wise man, when it is only in such raving madness that I am at home?

But let me tell you something. To the temple at Delphi came princes and people from all the ends of the world to hear prophecies about themselves. The priests were sages, who imparted the prophecies to them; they, however, first received them from the Pythoness, who, in the wildest throes of ecstasy at the tripod of inspiration, gave utterance to the words of the gods in strange groans, which the *priests* had only to translate into speech intelligible to the world. I believe that one who has sat at the tripod can never again be a priest; he stands in the immediate presence of the god!

Remember, besides, that Dante did not meet his taciturn and smooth-spoken sages in Paradise, but in some doubtful middle region between Heaven and Hell. But on the cross the Saviour could say to the poor thief, "To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise."

You see, you cannot get even with me—my cunning is a match for anything, and I have a terrible amount of mythology in my head. Grant me that, and I will grant *you* that you are right—and, still more, that it costs me nothing to admit it to you, for whenever I chance to think upon the subject which you bring home to me so anxiously, I become so angry and so discontented with myself, that the only thing that can embitter my self-reproaches yet more, is the knowledge that others doubt that I ever make them! And yet after all, you dear child, it is my best comfort to learn that all these hidden processes of my heart are so tenderly and deeply shared by another. Be satisfied with me! Are you? * * * *

424. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, ZURICH

DEAREST FRIEND!

LUCERNE, 28th August, 1859.

Why should we not do a little *business*? You know that hitherto I have not been able to demand anything from Härtel's for the publication of my *Nibelungs*, save a declaration of their readiness to take the responsibility of publication, with the offer to share with me the profits accruing from sales. Six months ago I tendered the Grand Duke of Weimar the profits from the copyright of the scores

to be published; for each score he was to pay me what Härtel's conceded me for *Tristan* and, on his part, to appropriate my rights in a share of the profits on the publication. To this I got a higgling, evasive reply (which Liszt attributed to Dingelstedt's influence) and I let the matter rest.

Nevertheless it is so important for me to raise money on these scores at once if I can, and my inclination to finish the whole so much depends on the encouragement derived from the interest of others in this work, that, in my present happy and confident frame of mind, the idea has occurred to me to make *you* the proffer rejected by Weimar.

Let me forthwith adduce in brief what is to be said for the thing on its merits—leaving aside all those friendly considerations on which alone, of course, the whole transaction would actually rest. As soon as the operas were performed and the possibility of wider publicity became apparent, Härtel's would instantly give me the required honorarium for the publication. You cannot be expected, purely as a business man, to make light of the many difficulties which stand in the way of such an issue, and yet I know for certain that I shall overcome them, and the ensuing production of *Tristan* is the first step in that direction. I shall do with this work exactly as I have done with the others. I shall pay the utmost attention to making a success of the first performance, but after that, without troubling myself further, I shall leave the matter confidently to the theatres, which will presumably begin with the more popular pieces, such as *Young Siegfried*, and gradually arrange for the others, a process which will be expedited by the intensely national subject-matter. Quite apart, however, from this subsequent dissemination, a first performance is not to be thought of except under conditions which will draw the interest of the whole world upon the work in such a degree that the success, and consequently the sales, of the publication are bound to be out of all proportion to anything previously seen in this domain.

Moreover, in work such as this, I am thinking very little of the present and appealing (assuredly with more right than any of my predecessors) to the next generation and to posterity, so that had I children, and were my means such as to allow it, I would most certainly refuse to part with this work except on condition of getting a share in the proceeds. If I surrender my rights in it to another, who has both means to enable him to await gradual and perhaps tardy returns, and heirs to whom these returns may some day be beneficial, I believe that I do so upon a right estimate of my own position in relation to that of that hypothetical other.

Moreover, I can direct that other's attention to the chances offered in the long run by copyright in such works; I noticed recently, that the fortune left by Schiller to his heirs consisted solely in the continued proceeds from his works and that these heirs enjoy a handsome income from them to-day.

Such are the considerations which have induced me (even while pointing out to you the benefits contained in this suggestion for myself) to insist that it is a real bargain, albeit only realisable with time. If you accept my proposition, I shall cherish the sure satisfaction of having made you an honest business offer, even if circumstances for the moment do not look favourable; and on my very death-bed I shall be conscious that, even if it has not occurred by then, you or yours will get back the capital you have expended with interest, and perhaps with proportionate profit.

All the same, I do not pretend that it is anything other than *my* personal convenience which is in question. I know better than anyone can tell me, that on *your* side quite different motives must be at work if you are to enter upon such a speculative transaction, and here I can only assure you that I should know how to assess your acquiescence at its true value.—The results of your consent would be very heartening for me. In regard to my future work, I should find myself in the favourable pecuniary position, which lately I supposed (with what silent despair you may imagine!) I should have to create for myself by the proposed American adventure—that is to say, I could lay by for some time all my ensuing profits from the theatres and so assure my position for years to come. But the happiest aspect of the business would arise from the fact that this amenity would spring directly from work to which I should henceforth devote myself, undistracted and undeviating. No other method could mean the same thing to me, and, indeed, I am firmly resolved to accept no further help which does not proceed from my own work; I may tell you here in passing that for some time past I have not accepted the yearly allowance from the Ritters, despite the most touching protests on the part of these noble friends of mine.¹

Should you propose to accept my offer, I would insist on a legal deed of sale * *. To establish the price of each score, I would refer to what I received from Härtel's for *Tristan*. They pay me 200 louis d'or down for the score and assign me a share in the profits up to a further 100 louis d'or from the proceeds, so that in return for permanent surrender of my copyright I would require 300 louis d'or for each score, or preferably, 6000 francs. Accordingly you

¹ See No. 377.

would have to pay me forthwith for my two finished works, (1) *The Rhinegold* and (2) *The Valkyrie*, 12,000 francs, another 6000 francs at the completion of *Young Siegfried*, and the same sum again when the last of the four pieces is finished.—For the rest, your copyright having been assured, the finished scores should be sent as soon as possible (say after the production of *Tristan*) to Härtel's for printing and publication. This publication, as you know, matters very much to me, and the fact that it will occupy much time is an additional reason why your acceptance of my offer would be a great convenience to me, since otherwise I should feel I still ought to hesitate before putting the scores in Härtel's hands. It is understood that I would myself undertake the necessary steps with the publishers in your name.

What do you think of this proposal¹ (which to-day I do not wish to regard as a petition)?

When I reflect what sacrifices you have made already to assist me and my work, I cannot but feel almost sure that I am not asking too much, either of your means or your inclinations. Only I might well be doubtful if you have not already acquired a right in my work by your earlier sacrifices and—against this I should indeed have nothing to say, but could only throw myself on your mercy. * * *

425. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

LUCERNE, 1st September, 1859.

* * * * You mustn't let yourself be led astray by reporters.² In such cases they seldom agree with the public, which is at least always disinterested. What sort of fellows these Dresden scribblers are, I see further in a thing of C. Bank's which has been sent to me. It absolutely disgusts and sickens me to look at such stuff, even held at arm's-length. You must not on any account worry about this sort of thing, and never read it. I for my part won't read what is written in my favour. *Good intelligent performances*—that and nothing else pleases me.—* * * *

426. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BERLIN

LUCERNE, 2nd September, 1859.

* * * * What, among other things, really amazes me, is that my miserable relations with the Saxon Government,³ which condemn

¹ Wesendonck accepted. Contract dated 7 September. On 8 September Wagner received 6000 francs in cash and a bill for the same amount, due on 2 November, for the scores of *The Rhinegold* and *The Valkyrie*.

² On the Dresden production of *Lohengrin*. See No. 421.

³ See Nos. 419, 428.

me for all time to the apparent status and dependence of an adventurer, should have been left entirely unaided by the press, which is more or less friendly to me! * * * In Dresden they ask me, after fully ten years, to submit to trial, the King reserving his decision as to my pardon till after judgment has been delivered. I have recently pointed out to the Minister of Justice the senselessness of imposing the torment of such a trial and examination upon a man like myself after so long a time. Eventually, however, I made the state of my health a pretext, and begged that the conditions should be dispensed with, as an exception in my case, on that account. Hereupon—no answer whatsoever! Are these not matters worthy of being brought forward in, for example, the Prussian press? * * * *

427. TO FRAU JULIE RITTER, DRESDEN

LUCERNE, 2nd September, 1859.

* * * * Not long after our last anxious interchange of letters, I got a sign of life from Karl who wrote from Rome, as if he knew how I stood with you, and gave me the comforting assurance that news of you and Emmeline had reached him and that he had written to you both from Rome. I did not learn any details of what he was doing, but still enough to know that I was absolved from the engagement I made to you to let you have Karl's address as soon as I was able. * * *

Having touched on these matters, still troublous in memory, can you still spare some sympathy if I tell you a little about myself? About a month ago I completed my *Tristan* and feel that I have achieved something really significant. In any case this work is more *music* than anything I have done before. It is already in the press, and I hope shortly to be able to send you a printed copy of the music. The rehearsal of the work should begin at once in Karlsruhe.¹ * * *

At the same period I propose to rejoin my poor wife. I dare to hope that the care of her health, which for a time I could better provide for when separated than by her side, may have mitigated in some degree her painful heart-disease and in general made her state more bearable. Your news, at least, is reassuring, even though I am bound to perceive that there can be no question of actual cure and that she will continue to need the greatest care and immunity from any kind of excitement. Heaven grant I may never lack the patience necessary to carry through my firm and heart-

¹ Nothing came of this project.

felt purpose of treating her at all times with the greatest circumspection. I confess that my connection with this poor, much-tried and still suffering woman has become a perpetual spur to make me care for and develop my own moral capacities. In all my relations with her, I am guided solely by profound pity for her condition, and I confidently hope that this will arm me with steadfast patience, not only to bear the consequences of her illness, but to devote myself wholly to alleviating them. And so I believe that I shall not lack success, and that even for her a peaceful eventide of life may compensate for a stormy midday.—

We shall probably have no choice but to settle permanently in Paris after leaving Karlsruhe. * * * *

428. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

LUCERNE, 6th September, 1859.

* * * * I have been in frequent correspondence lately with Tichatschek. He begged that *I* would draw up a fresh petition to His Majesty for pardon and present it through Privy Councillor Behr. My reply was that *I* could think of nothing new to say to the King, and, as everything I had already said, or caused to be said, to him had achieved no response but contemptuous silence, I could not believe that the King expected to hear from me again. Furthermore, all the things that might be said in my favour could be said not by *me* but only by some third person. Could it be intimated to me that His Majesty only awaited a fresh petition from me to declare his intentions, I should be ready. But I must first be assured of that.—My dear child, after the recent performance of *Lohengrin*, Herr von Lüttichau might well have made occasion to assist me—were it only to make amends for the indecorous and contemptuous manner in which he waived¹ aside my very exhaustive, and indeed very open-hearted, letter from Venice. But it does not occur to him. Well, at least I have reminded him through Tichatschek that the honorarium for *Lohengrin* should certainly, and with my consent, be set off against the large advance to me which remains unpaid. Only, properly speaking, he should have come to an agreement with me as to the *amount* of the honorarium, for I am no longer in his service and it was for me to assess the value of my works, etc. But these people continue to behave so discourteously and disrespectfully to me that I really have no wish to take the least notice of them outside the question of my rights. The — take the lot of them! * * * *

¹ See No. 394, note 1.

429. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, ZURICH

PARIS, 17th September, 1859.

**** I have now decided, whatever happens, to stay in Paris some time in order to ascertain once for all whether it has any advantages to offer me, and I have given orders to-day for my furniture to be sent on. Besides, I am quite indifferent as to *where* I live, if I can only feel comfortable enough within my own four walls to be able to give myself up once more to the old delight in my work. ***

For the present, I am preserving a strict incognito. ***

*** Those four bright days on your hospitable hill¹ have acquired a lovely significance for me; they live in me still as pledges of a noble bliss such as never can be given, but only earned! Let us hold it fast! ***

430. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

PARIS, 23rd September, 1859.

**** The young man [de Charnal] who made a translation of *Tannhäuser* gave it to me to look through. After the first fleeting glance I let it fall and said to myself, "This is impossible!" I felt I was rid of a troublesome idea—that of a French *Tannhäuser*—and I breathed more freely. But it was only my own personality which did so; that *other*, my daemon—my genius?—said to me: "You see how incapable this Frenchman, or any other, is of translating your poems, and so you mean to prevent any performance of your work in France at all. But how will it be when you are dead and when for the first time your works begin really to live?—when there is no need to ask your permission, and *Tannhäuser* is performed in just such a translation as now lies before you and treated just as uncomprehendingly as the noblest German poems (*Faust*, for example)?" Ah, child, this expectation of a possible immortality is a daemon of quite a special kind, and brings one the same cares which bind mother and father to the welfare of their child long beyond the limits of their own lives. I alone can get an adequate translation of my works, and this duty I cannot avoid. Now I spend morning after morning sitting with my young poet and go through it verse for verse, word for word, nay, syllable for syllable with him. I often seek for hours on end for the best turn of speech, the best word. I sing to him, I give him insight into a world utterly closed to him before. I am delighted now with his zeal, his growing enthusiasm and his frank con-

¹ See No. 434.

fession of his former blindness—and—we shall see! At least I know that, as well as I can, I am caring for my child's eternal future! * * * *

24th September.

* * * * From the practical standpoint, things are turning out very tolerably indeed. My price here has just begun to rise, and lately it has seemed likely that the rise would be fairly rapid—at any rate, since my conversation yesterday with the director [Carvalho] of the *Théâtre Lyrique* (a really pleasant and reasonable man), it lies in my hand alone how soon I make a Parisian *fortune*. Well, I pray that things will turn out so that I can keep my affairs straight this winter and go back to my dear Switzerland in the spring—for only there can Siegfried wake Brynhilde! That could not very well be managed in Paris.—I am expecting almost at once a very detailed reply from Karlsruhe on many points. I am holding out for a very high standard there. I may be giving them trouble, but it can't be helped! The fruit of *Tristan* is not to be easily plucked! * * * *

43I. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

PARIS, 2nd October, 1859.

* * * To-day, having just received Professor Fröhlich's¹ answer, I can discuss that business with you at once, and I will take it first. You will see from the enclosed letter, that I on my part have left nothing undone to fulfil your wishes in respect of Natalie. I leave it to you to decide what action to take. * * * I cannot think that *one* year will see the end of the business or that Natalie will then get an engagement at once, and accordingly I must be prepared for two years in any case. In the meantime, I am determined that it is indispensable, cost what it may, for you to engage yourself a companion and attendant. How ill these two undertakings accord, and how bitter I am inclined to feel against Natalie on that account, I leave you to judge; but I tell you quite candidly that in my opinion even this sacrifice will do *nothing* for Natalie's future. To take up a project like this at her age requires energy of character and a better grounding in the rudiments of knowledge. The idea of dealing with children seems so very pleasant to her, simply because she has no idea what, for example, an English family expects of a governess, or that even if her attainments should reach the required level, her slack and apathetic character would never give satisfaction. If the attempt is, nevertheless, to be made at her time of life, I could only give it my full approval if that attempt * * were to be made

¹ See No. 419. From No. 435 it appears that Fröhlich lived in Berne.

under easier conditions. With a young person of *energetic* character, despite her maturity, I would say unconditionally, "Yes! Berne—systematic, thorough and the best!" But with Natalie's nature I would ask you to consider whether it would not be preferable to make the attempt nearer home. There *must* be opportunities in Dresden, where there surely exist establishments for the training of governesses. Even if three years were required * * the experiment would be cheaper in Dresden, and better, too, from my point of view, for I should have to reckon on *two* years at least in Berne (piano-playing and English are not to be learned overnight). Consequently, please do all you can in Dresden first. * * * I promised Natalie, if she looked after you to your complete satisfaction, that I would show myself correspondingly grateful to her. Although she does not seem to have fully answered to my wishes, I have, nevertheless, determined in any event to support her for the future, and I am ready to allow her fifty thalers regularly every year. * * * I even thought of Meck's family. It seems as though we were always looking round for strange families while our own relatives are compelled to take strangers into their homes, and the Mecks have children, too. Why not try there, where, after all, they will not be so particular and her present attainments would be sufficient? With my annual contribution she would not be a burden to them but would, on the contrary, very likely be welcomed. * * *

Another thing, my dear Minna, is that I think I have reached an age now when one would like to enjoy the fruits of a long life of labour a little. I mean by this no more than household comforts and conveniences—and what I am able to get for myself in this kind is of value to me, for comfort and rest attune me to creative work, whereas when I am continually restlessly uncomfortable I waste an uncommon amount of time and temper. Besides, not only out of consideration for you, whom I should love to surround with every comfort, but on account of my own sensitive and difficult temperament, I find it harder than many other people to satisfy my needs for peace and quiet. To take the question of a dwelling-place, for instance. What strict precautions I have to take to be quite undisturbed, to hear no irritating sound, above all no piano-playing! Just imagine how difficult it is to protect oneself entirely against that kind of thing here in Paris! After incredible efforts I have at last succeeded in finding a lodging which satisfies all my requirements, but at the cost of 1000 francs a year more than for a place *without* these guarantees. * * *

I had to sign the contract for three years and to pay the rent for the last quarter in advance. In any case, however, I intend to

devote these three years to Paris and my enterprises here. In spite of the high cost of living I may hope to be able to leave here then with money in hand, and if Germany is open to me by that time to settle down with my old Mutze wherever I please, to end our days in peace. And these three years ought to pass agreeably—there is no hurry about my pardon till they are over—and so please do not let others mislead you into pressing me upon this point for the present. * * * *

432. TO ANTON PUSINELLI, DRESDEN

PARIS, 3rd October, 1859.

* * A feeling of intense well-being, of reconciliation with all mankind, is aroused in me whenever I reflect on your inestimable friendship. * * * That my wife had you for a doctor was fortunate for her, but that it should have been in Dresden was a misfortune. In any other place she would have been less exposed to all those influences * *. As to Paris, you are mistaken. My wife will live here with me in the greatest retirement. I have rented a very pleasant lodging on the outskirts of the town in a new, very quiet quarter, on high ground, in pure air, within reach of pleasant walks, the Bois de Boulogne, etc. I, too, need a quiet life to keep my health now; no social fuss and a maximum of peace and domestic comfort. I engage in my approaching enterprises here on the understanding that I stick strictly to the matter in hand and have absolutely nothing to do with the cultivation of *coteries*, which others think so necessary. Fortunately, my renown is so great even here in Paris, that I need have no considerations of this sort and can go my own way *in peace*. My wife will live very pleasantly and peacefully with me without either disturbing the other in the least. * * I shall not entertain, nor shall I press my wife to accept any invitations which may be extended to me * *. On the other hand I count on many an evening call from a few old and very congenial German friends, and my wife can frequently amuse herself by going to theatres and concerts. All these, however, as everything else in Paris, will, as it were, stand in a certain detached relation to her, like that of the play to the audience, whereas in Dresden she was in a sense in the midst of the action. Believe me, dearest friend, in taking my wife from Dresden to Paris I know very well *what* I am doing and *why*. Moreover, having me always at her side, a thousand occasions of anxiety and troubled fancy will be removed from her. * * * It is another matter, however, with the project for our meeting in Karlsruhe at the time of the rehearsal and performance of my new

work. * * * From the moment of my arrival there, I shall be involved in such multitudinous and exciting activities that, for the whole of my stay, I should be absolutely incapable of exerting a beneficial influence on my wife. I very much dread that period, particularly after having engaged in no activity of the kind for so long. The rehearsal for the *first* time of a new work like *Tristan*, requiring immense intellectual subtlety for its comprehension and extraordinary passion, is a task which I dare lay upon myself but seldom. Depression, almost despair, terrible excitement, superhuman nervous and even muscular exertions, will reduce me to a state in which I shall need any amount of consideration and tendance and be quite incapable of extending the same to others.—Add to that, our first sight of each other again, my wife's natural excitement, her worry about me and *her* anxiety for the success of my enterprise, my unbearable nervous irritability, etc. * * * The performance of *Tannhäuser* later in Paris will be quite a different matter. Owing to longer experience, my attitude to this older work is calm and objective.

I shall not myself conduct, but merely assist and see that all is properly understood. This will be an entertainment rather than an excitement for both of us. * * * *

* * * I hope to bring off a performance of *Tannhäuser* in Paris this coming winter. If so, I may then be successful in selling the opera to a Parisian publisher and have the satisfaction of fulfilling my promise conscientiously and repaying at once no small part of my pecuniary debt to you. * * *

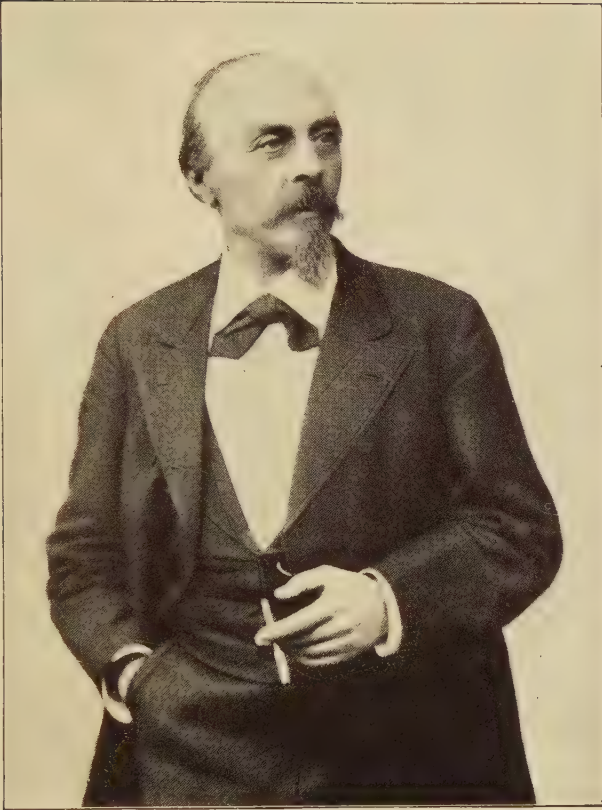
433. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, ZURICH

PARIS, 5th October, 1859.

* * * * What confirms me more strongly in my resolve to remain in strict retirement, is the possibility of producing *Tannhäuser* here, even yet.

If this should come about, I can only collaborate upon *one* condition, which is that I concern myself with nothing but the work itself. * * * The performance might possibly take place in the middle of January. The translation is still the main difficulty, and I see this much—that my young aspirant for success in vaudeville ¹ whom I've been taking all this trouble over, will not do at all. Now, however, the best prospect conceivable has presented itself. I * * * will only tell you that *Roger* is now under consideration as translator. * * *

¹ De Charnal. See No. 430.



HANS VON BÜLOW

*From a photograph in the Stadtgeschichtliches Museum,
Leipzig*

With all the rest I have trouble enough, and especially with my excellent Devrient at Karlsruhe. I see that he at last has sunk pretty deep into mere routine. For all his eminent qualities there has always unfortunately been a leathery strip in his nature which now seems to have lost all its elasticity.¹ The answers he makes me at times! * * * My affairs there are by no means settled as yet, and I have still to receive speaking proofs of energetic purpose in the capital young Grand Duke. * * * *

434. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BERLIN

PARIS, 7th October, 1859.

* * * * As to the Karlsruhe enterprise itself, my hopes are not particularly high. Devrient has gradually sunk to the level of a mere mechanic and no more. He has no comprehension of what he has to deal with here and his chief care is simply for his "Institute." A singer for Isolde is quite definitely not to be found and I shall have to make the best of the voiceless Garrigues,² always supposing she decides to conquer the difficulty of the numerous low passages. I am rather out of humour with Karlsruhe, particularly as I hear nothing at all of the fulfilment of the Grand-Ducal promises, and I rack my brains to secure some more favourable chance of a first performance for my *Tristan*. I am even thinking of Berlin, as your new tenor³ and Mme. Wipperfurth (of whom I hear a good report), or even Johanna, offer me no bad prospect—my personal direction being, of course, indispensable. * * *—How would it be if you were to put on your best clothes and demand an audience of the young Prince [Frederick William] of Prussia?⁴ You would have to tell him confidentially of my anxieties about the first performance of my new work, and * * * ask him whether he would undertake to answer the petition I should address him, if all went well, to negotiate a temporary summons to Berlin (for a period of four weeks) for the sole purpose of conducting a first performance of *Tristan*. * * *—Also I should much like Vienna; better, perhaps, than Berlin.—* * *

I have read the abstract of your letter⁵ on *Tristan*. It will not be well received. I have nothing to say about your remarks as to beauty, greatness, etc.; that is your affair. But I deprecate as unpractical your expression of doubt as to the likelihood of the opera's popularity. Such words are not spoken simply *among ourselves* but

¹ "Leathery" is German slang for dullness, Philistinism. (TRANS.)

² This lady, who later married the tenor Schnorr, was, however, the first Isolde in Munich, in 1865.

³ Theodore Formes.

⁴ Hans von Bülow does not appear to have attempted this intervention.

⁵ This letter has not been published.

spread to those who do not understand us, or who are more or less permanently hostile, and this fact should always be considered in writing for publication. Härtel's are already becoming difficult on account of the expressed doubts of—my own friend. What have you, I, and our few real friends to do with this tiresome question of popularity? Why touch upon it at all? In the same way, there are many matters which we are quite frank about among ourselves (for instance, that since my acquaintance with Liszt's compositions my treatment of harmony has become very different from what it was formerly), but it is indiscreet, to say the least, of friend Pohl to babble this secret to the whole world in the prominent first lines of his short article on the overture to *Tristan*. I cannot suppose, can I, that he was *authorised* to this indiscretion? * * * I believe he embarrasses Liszt, even if he pleases the Princess.

Well, this is merely by the way. I must bewail to you, in confidence, that I simply do not know how to find words to write to Liszt now. I have been tormenting myself for weeks over the intention of writing to him. I might well take it more lightly, for *I* have never really had a letter from Liszt but, at best, only answers to my letters, and these always half or a quarter the length of mine. That shows he feels no impulse towards me. If I address him he becomes the best friend a man can conceive—but *he* does not address *me*. How can I go on perpetually accosting him? Of course, my lot in life gives me very frequent occasion to apply to my friends, but I must try gradually to accustom my lot to do without this! *How* things are between Liszt and myself or, rather, *what* stands between us, you can judge for yourself from his behaviour. * * *

I know that Liszt's generous nature conquers in each conflict as it arises. The lines inscribed on his *Dante* ¹ showed me a fine emotion, a noble sense of shame for his recent weakness, in which, apparently because of insinuations, he behaved coldly to me. Therefore Liszt will always stand to me for something noble, deeply sympathetic, wonderful and dear, but the happy pursuance of our friendship is no longer to be thought of. His neglect of its cultivation has strikingly outrun my own. I *can* do nothing now but follow his example. I have always had to have *too many reserves* with him, and that makes friendship impossible. I am *at a loss* for further words to him—my warmth has too often been answered by mere phrases. But *I* cannot write mere phrases to him; he is too dear to me for that.— * * *

I live a completely solitary and retired life here. I went to tea with Madame Charnacé a little while ago. She is very nice, but we do not understand each other. I shall go on living my own quiet

¹ See No. 408, note 1, p. 45.

life. I am very grateful to you for Gaspérini; he is pleasant, lively and seems disposed to be helpful. How the *Tannhäuser* affair will go, I do not know. Everything depends in the first place on a good translation. Cosima and Hans could be very useful there. Are they industrious? Härtel's, the horrors, have sent me not a word of the pianoforte arrangement [of *Tristan*] despite all my reminders. It passes belief!— * * * *

I stayed four days in Zurich as a guest¹ at the Wesendoncks'. The husband is very devoted to me and admirable in the truest sense of the word. A beautiful, and certainly very rare, relation has been evolved there, and has proved what true sincerity can do with even the least gifted natures. And so the husband stands between me and the wife whom he had to resign utterly, as truest friend—I can well say it—of both. I am supremely proud of this development; I was guided only by my very intense craving not to deprive the poor lady of my companionship. Now the almost fabulous attempt has succeeded. We visited each other repeatedly, between Lucerne and Zurich. I was continually in her house, and all I could do to help the loyal lady in her difficult lot was done with the genuine pleasure of her husband in my visit and my stay. There is a lovely piece of work for you! Show me its like!—

I am reuniting with my unhappy wife * *. She depends on me for life and death, and therefore my attitude to her is settled for me in advance. * * * *

435. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

PARIS, 9th October, 1859.

* * * * I was touched by your decision, and by Natalie's letter too. Once again, I deplore that she of all people has not been able to persuade herself to be permanently a faithful and pleasant attendant to you. But all this is a question of temperamental dispositions which are simply not to be changed. The Berne² project vexed me chiefly because of the select and expensive *pension*. * * * Let Natalie adhere to her wish, then, to train herself as a governess, but let her do so at home. I should be sorry if she were to go back to the rough social conditions of Zwickau³ merely on account of the small cost of her keep; and you, my dear Minna, found the idea repellent yourself. Accordingly, I wish Natalie to stay in Dresden and take rooms with Mme. Schiffner, or close by, arranging with

¹ See No. 429.

² Natalie wished to prepare for a governess's examination under Prof. Fröhlich.

³ With her aunt, Frau Tröger, she had been maidservant rather than daughter of the house.

Mme. Schiffner for her board. Then she can look about her for good tuition. * * * I will defray *the full cost* of all this until Natalie gets a post which will keep her entirely. So, *in any event*, she is to spend a few years now in learning something thoroughly; this will stand her in good stead all her life and improve her position. If she should have an opportunity of marrying and the marriage appear impossible simply by reason of her poverty, I pledge myself herewith to give her a good *trousseau*, together with 200 thalers a year for life, which might suffice a decent man as dowry.

Accordingly, from to-day on I assume full responsibility for Natalie, so that she may know she is fully provided for and is dependent on no one in this world but myself. * * * *

436. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

PARIS, 10th October, 1859.

I had a very surprising adventure to-day. I presented myself at a Customs office to collect my things, which had arrived from Lucerne. The trunks were down in the book, but not my name. I showed my letter of advice and gave my name, whereupon one of the officials [Edmond Roche] rose and said, "Je connais bien M. Richard Wagner, puisque j'ai son médaillon suspendu sur mon piano, et je suis son plus ardent admirateur." "Quoi?" "Ne soyez pas surpris de rencontrer à la douane de Paris un homme capable de goûter les incomparable beautés de vos partitions, que j'ai étudiées toutes," etc.

I was like a man in a dream. An enthusiast at the *douane*, where I was expecting great difficulties in collecting my furniture! The good man sprang up and ran to help me. He insisted on making the examination himself. He had a wife who played the piano very well. He himself had literary aspirations and in the meantime lived by his official appointment. He told me of an extensive circle who had educated themselves almost entirely through the spread of the knowledge of my works. As he did not understand German, I demurred that I could not see how he could have found pleasure in music which was intimately connected with poetry and the actual turn of verse. To this he rejoined that it was just because of this very definite and close connection with the poetic speech, that he was able to deduce the poetry from the music and that, therefore, the foreign language became completely intelligible to him through the music. What could I say? I must begin to believe in miracles! * * I have asked my new friend, who has touched me deeply, * * to visit me.

Do you know, I have ceased to feel that my operas are such a paradoxical impossibility in Paris? Bülow has given me an introduction to a physician and author here, Dr. Gaspérini, and he and a friend, likewise a typical Frenchman, are just in the same case as my Customs officer. These people play *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* to me without leaving me a word to say. The fact that they do not know German does not trouble them in the very least. The director of the *Théâtre Lyrique* [Carvalho] announced his desire to hear me go through *Tannhäuser*. They all came together, and I had to endure the strain of going through it, first with exact explanations of the text in French (what that cost me!) and then singing and playing from it. Then at last they actually began to see daylight, and the impression made on them seemed to be remarkable. All this seems so fabulous to me with these Frenchmen!

On the other hand, the news I receive from Germany is gloomy and glum. Friend Devrient cares for nothing but the smooth running of his "Institute" and keeps everything unusual and experimental at a distance as possibly disturbing. * * *

Yes, children! If only you had got so far in Switzerland, by way of gratitude for the honest sweat I have expended there, as to build me even a passable theatre, I should have what I need for ever and should ask nothing further of anyone! I should manage to get together the singers and orchestra I needed for the first performance of each new work as I came to it. Conductors and singers should be summoned to these performances to see a model interpretation, and, once this was in existence, I should feel I had provided for everything and would live in peace without troubling about the further fate of my works. How sublime, how beautiful, how utterly answering to my wants that would be! I should then need no princes, no amnesty, no word from anyone, good or bad. I should be free and exempt from all anxiety about posterity. * * * *

437. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

PARIS, 17th October, 1859.

* * * * Now for Natalie. After ripe consideration, I feel it my bounden duty to be absolutely *opposed* to Natalie's coming to Paris. The experiences of your incompatibility are so utterly deterrent that I should think myself greatly to blame for making a fresh experiment in this direction in the present state of your health. The last attempt has just been made in Dresden, and I have gathered repeatedly from your own letters that you two cannot hit it off for any length of time. On the other hand, in your last change of mind

I perceive the same weakness which you showed four years ago when we corresponded¹ on this point between Zurich and Mornex and you suddenly declared for Natalie's remaining again. I experienced the results of it in the unseemly scene which finally hastened Natalie's departure, which should never have occurred, and which must not recur in our house for the future. I am not inimical to Natalie on that account all the same, and shall hold to what I promised her in my last letter. * * * *

438. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

PARIS, 20th October, 1859.

* * * Accept my cordial good wishes for your birthday! It means very much to me that just now, when I am seriously pondering our mutual relations, I should come upon this day, which must certainly be counted as one of the most fortunate days in Nature's calendar. * * *

Your friendship is indispensable to me; I cling to it with all my might.

When am I to see you again, after so long?

Have you an idea, I wonder, of the position I am in? Of what miracles of loyalty and love I need, over and over again, to pluck up courage, to be patient? * * *

I ask once more, then, when shall we meet again? Karlsruhe is more than uncertain; *Tristan*, altogether, has become shadowy again, a semi-impossibility. Don't wait for some such external occasion to bring you to me. At best, the *Tristan* time, with the terrible and despairing efforts it will impose on me, is not a fit time for our first reunion. Let your innermost heart bring you to me. I expect my wife about the middle of November. Could I not have you *before*?—

It is bad enough for me to have to call you, and that you never come of your own accord!

I heard of the marriage of Princess Marie yesterday through Bülow. * * *

* * * I am just on the point of moving into my new quarters, so I have "settled down" once more—without faith, without love or hope! * * *

439. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

PARIS, 23rd October, 1859.

MY DEAR CHILD!

Since last All Souls' Eve² the Master has seen Death again—this time as a kind benefactor.

¹ Cf. Wagner's letter of 19 June (No. 302) and 25th, 1856.

² Cf. a note in Wagner's diary, 1 November, 1858, intended for Mathilde.

A little while ago I went to look up Berlioz. I met him just coming to his own door, in a wretched state of health. He had just had electric treatment as a last attempt to combat his nervous disease. He told me of his sufferings and how, from the moment of waking, they increase upon him. I recognised my own pains and the sources which tend to increase them unbearably, prominent among which I reckon the incredible demands on the nerves—entirely unknown to other men—made by conducting and other passionate expositions of one's art. I realised that I should have been in even worse case than Berlioz if I imposed these exertions upon myself at all frequently, for I feel that, as it is, they have an increasingly ravaging effect on my health. In Berlioz's case, unfortunately, the stomach is already very much affected, and—trivial as it may sound—Schopenhauer is quite right when he names a sound digestion as, among other things, of outstanding importance in the physiological equipment of a genius. By extraordinary moderation I have kept this particular requisite in fairly serviceable condition in my own case, but in Berlioz's sufferings I foresaw my own probable destiny and left the poor fellow in an apprehensive frame of mind.

I still had half *Tannhäuser* to go through with my Frenchmen.¹ The strain was great, bitter mental emotions predominating. Next day came a slight error of diet * * and thereupon a real attack of illness which suddenly prostrated me. * * *

I am still not quite well again (what is called well!), but I will give you the latest news. The "dramatic idyll" at Karlsruhe is finished and done with. Devrient relieved me of the pain of having to refuse his singer [Garrigues], she herself having declared that she is not equal to the Isolde. It may rest at that, then. In any case the whole *Tristan* adventure is postponed indefinitely, and the door stands much wider open again for other approaching chances of fortune. * * * *

440. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

PARIS, 24th October, 1859.

* * * * Karlsruhe is—off. * * *—We shall see now what is to be done with this new work. I would rather give it for the first time with Tichatschek and Ney, as I know where I am with them. If the performance were to come off in Dresden, I could endure the delay—indeed I should even like this, as it would be very difficult for me to leave Paris this winter. There is work in plenty here, my

¹ Gaspérini, Belloni, etc.

Mutz. I could not get things straightened out with Roger till yesterday. I was visiting him at his country-place. As you know, the poor fellow lost his arm ¹ a little while ago. I took the pianoforte arrangement of *Tannhäuser* with me, but he had it already and had translated the first scene, which he sang very finely in French. So it is all settled. * * * * Consequently I must devote myself exclusively to Paris this winter and the *Tristan* would simply have been a nuisance. Still, my financial welfare depends on Paris! * * *

441. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, ZURICH

PARIS, 27th October, 1859.

* * * * It is all over with the calm sense of security in which I made my plans for a livelihood. This removal, new fittings and furnishings, have made hay of my calculations, and the day that I rented this little house and paid the rent for the last two quarters in advance—as demanded for security—was the beginning of endless worry for me. You could scarcely fail to wonder and would undoubtedly be surprised at my moderation, if I were to tell you in detail into what interminable *malheur* I have fallen. Well, we will leave that for another time!—At present it is with veritable grief I see the total wreckage of my schemes for providing for myself wholly from our *Nibelungs* transaction ² until a new and lasting capital could be accumulated from my savings from other sources; this has become impossible upon the proceeds of *The Rhinegold* and *The Valkyrie*. Listen to this patiently, and don't be angry with me when I tell you that, in my increasing anxiety for my immediate future, I looked about for the sources of supply which ought to flow for me from my other works. Even while I was casting up *Tristan* in this account, *Tristan* was suddenly and totally erased for an indefinite period—its first performance quite impossible for the present. * * * I know how pained I should have been by such a stunted performance, and yet I must almost regret seeing myself delivered from that pain. * * * In Berlin my "*Lohengrin*" ³ has lost his voice and I see the prospect of a long interruption in the run of the opera there. So I must look all the more greedily to the Paris *Tannhäuser*. Well, that will probably come off, and if I am in the right mood for it, this prospect of supply for the future is assured me (a valuable item to me as regards my affairs). Only I must not count on it at once. The manager is ready and anxious to be able to give the opera, but how long they will let his theatre stand (it

¹ A hunting accident. Cf. *My Life*, p. 716.

² See No. 424, note 1, p. 65.

³ The tenor Theodore Formes.

is to be pulled down to make a new thoroughfare) he does not know himself; it is possible they may begin to demolish it by March. They are to build him a big new theatre instead; I note that Carvalho wants to put off *Tannhäuser* till then. That does not look so bad for one who can wait, but in my present situation it is—ignominious. Well, I am getting on with the translation, anyhow. Roger will do it well; without, indeed, being quite on a cultural and intellectual level to do justice to his task from the poetic aspect, he is yet quite well fitted for the translation in all other ways. * * * I was with him again yesterday. I could see that I have to do with a man, amiable and talented by nature, who, however, cannot bear prolonged mental exertion and is glad to return to the trivialities of routine. He had only done a very little work and implored me to come more often to spur him on; all the same, he eagerly seized a pretext to leave the piano and slip away to the domino-table where he remained happily glued until I—seeing the company was hopeless—took hasty leave to retrace my steps to Paris. I am to go again on Monday. A terrible disgust, wounded pride, often boils up in me here, and I think of myself as wretched, dishonoured, unworthy to live. God knows if I am understood! What I might do and achieve! And yet, I see well enough that I must try to find myself in Roger; and really he is quite a likeable fellow. He has been blessed, too, in that pretty talent of his. His property and goods are valued at a million and he has a castle, too, in a huge park with fine tall trees, where he can play dominoes. And then I come back home and reflect whether I shall be blamed if I order *chenets*¹ for all the fire-places in my house.—Well—the world is made like that—and if I am in the right mood *Tristan* shall be made, too. *But*—I shall need the mood! You see that!

Seriously, I regard this Paris project as, at bottom, simply another piece of trickery to dangle something before my eyes and cheat me into patience. I know all about it! And now here's another bait for *Tristan*! The Dresden Intendant [von Lüttichau] sends word that he is hoping to work upon the King of Saxony to summon me to Dresden for a first performance of *Tristan*. But this could not take place before July next year. At least I should have singers with good voices there. Now, what is one to say to that?

* * * Of late I have acquired a lively conviction that I can forgo the performance of *Tristan* and everything else, if I can only be sure of being able to go on working undisturbed. I am bracing myself now and taking a deep breath for the last act of *Siegfried*—when I have sighed *that* out, I shall not mind what happens. For

¹ Fire-dogs.

I see this—I am only quite myself now when I am creating. The actual production of my works is for a more refined age, an age which I must first prepare through my sufferings! * * * *

442. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

PARIS, 29th October, 1859.

I am becoming increasingly conscious of a quality which my art acquires as it comes to rule my life as well. Rapid and abrupt changes of mood from one extreme to another are an essential part of my nature; moreover, it is true that extremes of emotional tension can scarcely do otherwise than impinge on each other—a fact which frequently saves the reason. * * * I am now inclined to call my subtlest and profoundest art the “art of transition,” for the whole fabric of my art is composed of such transitions. I have come to dislike the harsh and precipitate; often it is unavoidable and necessary, but even then it ought not to occur except where the temper of the audience has been so definitely prepared for a sudden transition that it actually demands it. My greatest masterpiece in the art of very subtle, very gradual transition is, no doubt, the big scene in the second act of *Tristan and Isolde*. At its opening, the act presents life abounding, palpitating with all its fiercest emotions; at its close, the most sacred, most fervent yearning for death. These are the two opposite poles, and now, child, let us see how I have united them, how the transition from one to the other has been accomplished! Well, that is a secret of my musical form, which, I am bold to assert, for unity, for balance, for clear comprehensiveness, combined with detail, has never before been even dreamed of. * * * I have never been more horrified than when cuts in my operas were proposed here, as, for instance, in *Tannhäuser*. It was in this opera that I first worked with a growing sense of the beautiful, convincing necessity of *transition*, and, between the outburst of horror at Tannhäuser’s hideous confession and the devotion with which, at length, Elizabeth’s intercession is heard, introduced a very significant transition motif of which I have always been proud and which has never failed to get its effect. You can easily imagine what I felt when I learned that here (as in Berlin) people saw nothing but long-windedness, and straightway struck out an essential portion of my work of art. * * * *

I picked out our dear Schiller from amongst my books. Yesterday I read *The Maid* and became so musically attuned that I was able to fill in the silence of Joan at her public accusation most excellently

with notes.¹ Her own fault—the wonderful one! To-day a speech of Posa² (at the end of Act II.) upon innocence and virtue has absolutely amazed me, on account of the incredible beauty of the poetic diction. How sorry I am not to be able to accede³ to a request recently made me by the committee of the Schiller Festival in Berlin to write a song upon it! * * * *

443. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BERLIN

PARIS, 1st November, 1859.

* * * * I have now looked a little into your pianoforte arrangement [of *Tristan*]. What I often regret is such frequent fullness at the extreme parts; perhaps you are too scrupulous about the inner detail. The bass is often much too slight, and reminds me of the old timid methods of arrangement. I think it would frequently be an improvement if the arrangement were in two parts only, with upper and lower parts in octaves. As it is, your caution tends to make it too weak and, in particular, I am continually irritated by the "consumptive" basses. I think that a pianoforte arrangement of this sort needs far more summary treatment. Nothing very clear emerges for the musician from the middle parts as arranged for the pianoforte. Still, all this may be easier to say than to do. * * * *

444. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

PARIS, 7th November, 1859.

* * * * Dear Fischer's death has grieved me deeply; I will not tell you how shaken I am by this sequence of sad and doleful tidings. Nothing cheering ever seems to happen now. All the more we trust that in mutual confidence in each other we may both find strength honestly to bear together life's burdens and trials. For the rest, I implore you from my heart to avoid all exciting ideas, even those of joy, at our approaching reunion; let us try to preserve calm and composure; let us gladly accept the good that is about to emerge for us from the tangle of our lives, and rejoice in this meeting simply as if it happened after one of us had been on a long journey. * * *

I shall see to a memorial for our Fischer, and hope I shall be able to set to work upon it to-morrow. * * *

¹ Never written down, however.

² In Schiller's *Don Carlos*.

³ Cf. a letter to Julius Stern, 30 October, 1859. (*An Freunde*, p. 260).

445. TO THE SAME

PARIS, 10th November, 1859.

Here * * is the *Homage*¹ to Fischer. Give it to Heine and tell him to look upon it as a letter to himself. He might preface the publication with a few words, explaining that this *Homage*, though intended to be made public, was originally a communication from the author to a mutual friend of Fischer. He should retain the date. Unfortunately I have been so much interrupted that I could not make the copy till to-day. * * * *

446. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

PARIS, 11th November, 1859.

* * * * I am slowly getting better, and—I will admit it now—from a serious illness. * * * I really thought I should succumb this time. * * *

I got my first piece of good news—from myself! The proofs of the third act of *Tristan* suddenly arrived. You will be able to feel with me how the sight of this last completed work revitalised me, strengthened me, filled me—threw me into raptures. Surely a father can scarce feel such joy at the sight of his child! In a flood of tears—why disown the weakness?—a voice within me cried, “No! You are not finished yet—you have still to bring your work to an end. The man who has just created such a work as this is still full to overflowing!” * * * *

After that, a very melancholy task of love fell to my lot. I suddenly heard of the mortal illness of my dear fatherly Fischer, in Dresden, * * * and then came news of his death. * * * In the last few days I have composed a memorial work² to the dear fellow. * * *

The workmen are still in the house; these Parisians are only at home in *your* home. My little flat is at last in order. If you were to walk in, you would almost believe you saw me still in my “Asyl.” The same furniture, the old desk, the same green carpets, engravings—everything just as you knew them. Only the rooms are smaller, and I have had to economise space. * * * *

A few days ago I was invited to a musical *soirée*, where sonatas, trios, etc., of Beethoven’s latest period were played. Both interpretation and execution displeased me very much and I shall not be caught again so soon. Still, I had some experiences. I sat down by Berlioz, who immediately introduced to me the composer

¹ First printed in the *Dresdener Konstituelle Zeitung*, 25 November, 1859 (*Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. v.).

² See No. 445, note above.

Gounod, who was seated next to him—a pleasant-looking man with sincere aspirations; but I think not a very highly gifted artist. The moment it became known that I was there, all the world pressed round Berlioz to be introduced to me—an astonishing throng of enthusiasts who have studied my scores without understanding German. It often puzzles me exceedingly. I am afraid now of having many visitors, and must be on my guard somewhat. Up to now I have neglected young Mme. Charnacé shamefully. * * *

I am reading Liszt's *Gipsy Music*¹—something too high-flown and rhetorical; still, the vigorous presentation of the gipsy nature (unmistakably the Shandalas of India) has brought Prakivi (or Savitri) very vividly² again to my mind. * * *

447. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

PARIS, 23rd November, 1859.

* * * * You probably know enough already about the Karlsruhe enterprise. Devrient has thought well to excuse the consequences of his utterly inadequate and negligent handling of the idea of a first performance of *Tristan* at his theatre, by declaring the work impossible to produce. I am not answering that, either. What am I to say? I know my fate and my position—and am silent. It is a more serious matter to measure the effect on my livelihood of thus cutting off my new work from the roll of the living. * * *

My wife has just arrived. She is somewhat better, and I hope things will go tolerably well with me. She did not complain, but mentioned that you had been in Dresden without visiting her; I did my best to comfort her on the point. * * * *

448. TO ALBERT NIEMANN, HANOVER

PARIS, 25th November, 1859.

* * * * If I can bring together Germany's best singers, male and female, for the purpose, I propose³ to perform my operas here in Paris next spring from about the end of April to the middle of June, with a model German company, closing a repertoire of alternating performances with a first production of *Tristan*. I shall not lack a good French impresario and guarantor, but before I can take up the matter more seriously I must be sure that the singers

¹ *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie* (Leipzig, 1859); also in vol. vi. of Liszt's *Gesammelte Schriften*, published by Ramann.

² Proof that even at this date the subjects of *The Victors* and the allied *Parzival* were occupying Wagner's attention.

³ It came to nothing.

I choose will come at my call and make this important and most difficult enterprise financially possible by moderating their demands, for honour's sake and for mine. As frequent performances will be necessary to cover the enormous expenses, I must provide for the double casting of the most exacting rôles. Accordingly, everything depends in the first instance on whether the best exponents of my work will have enough sympathy with my extraordinary fate, exiled now, and probably for ever, from Germany, to moderate their claims and make the enterprise practicable.

I count in the first place * * on you, and ask you to cheer me soon with a favourable reply.

As regards my immediate projects, I have arrived at a crisis which I can only tell you of verbally. Only I assure you of this much, that your visit may prove decisively efficacious for me. * * * *

449. TO B. SCHOTT AND SONS, MAINZ

PARIS, 11th December, 1859.

* * Your flattering and gratifying offer to publish a dramatic musical work of mine, comes at a moment which I can only call both favourable and unfavourable. Favourable—because I actually have a work on hand which I should like to see published soon, unfavourable—because I am still unable¹ to enter Germany, and the consequent obstacles to a first theatrical production of my new work, at which it is absolutely essential that I should be present personally, cannot but set bounds to the eagerness of my publisher. Under these persistently unfavourable circumstances, I cannot quite make up my mind to forgo, for the sake of my wish to see my work published soon, the advantages which I am convinced will accrue if I wait for the moment when I can personally call my operas into being upon the stage.

I could only come to an agreement with a publisher who, like myself, had faith in the destiny of my more mature works, was able to see beyond present obstacles, and would be content, for sole guarantee, with the success of my earlier works, which for a long time were thought impracticable and which have now a wide circulation that surprises even myself. If I further consider how much there is at present in favour of the publication of my later works, and if I may suppose that interest in them is so considerable that they will be in exceptional demand even before they appear on the stage, I think I may hold that the time has come to discuss the matter seriously with a publisher of your standing.

¹ Wagner was not allowed to return to Germany till autumn 1860.

Under the conditions indicated above, I reply to your very kind offer with the counter-offer of a music-drama, *The Rhinegold*. I am particularly desirous at the moment that this work should be published, because, while the issue of *Tristan and Isolde* marks my first reappearance after a considerable interval as a creative artist, I want to represent myself in as "rational" a guise as may be to the educated public, and *The Rhinegold* belongs to a genre very different from that of *Tristan*, revealing quite a new side of my art—I might call it the "characteristically popular"—not hinted at in any of my earlier works. Consequently the appearance of this work, following hard upon *Tristan*, would be very opportune for me.

If you should be willing to have patience and allow me up to two years to bring off a first theatrical performance of this work, I would indicate the conditions upon which I would place it in your hands briefly as follows:

For an honorarium of 10,000 francs, payable at once, I am willing to sell you the score¹ and the completed and very successful pianoforte arrangement of my music-drama, *The Rhinegold*, with the right of publishing this work in Germany, France and England, only reserving to myself the right of regulating theatrical performances. All you would have to pay to the author of the pianoforte arrangement, Herr Charles Klindworth, of London, would be the usual honorarium for such work reckoned by the page. You would have the right to issue a cheap edition of the libretto for sale for the purpose of theatrical performances, but with the express reservation that you must come to an agreement on this point with that publisher with whom I shall reserve the right to negotiate for a special *de luxe* edition of my great dramatic poem, *The Ring of the Nibelungs*, to be published as a literary work² apart from the music. *The Rhinegold* is an integral and independent part of this dramatic poem, which I hope to get published shortly by a publisher of high standing. Finally, it might be left to your discretion as to whether you should issue the score at once, or whether you would prefer to wait until the first theatrical performance is assured, which I undertake shall be in two years' time at latest. * * * *

450. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, STAYING IN ROME

PARIS, 12th December, 1859.

* * * * The great firm of music-dealers, Messrs. B. Schott and Sons, of Mainz, which has been inimical to me hitherto, has addressed

¹ See No. 450.

² See No. 390, note, p. 32.

a request to me for one of my big dramatic musical works for publication. I have made them a straightforward offer of *The Rhinegold*, with the sole reservation of the right to have a complete edition of the whole poem of *The Ring of the Nibelungs* published by a literary publisher, and I have asked what terms they propose to offer. I now ask you for your consent¹ in case Schott's were to offer not less than 6000 francs. If you do consent—as I hope you will—will you empower me to conclude the sale of the rights of publication of *The Rhinegold* on the condition that the firm of Schott pay you or your firm 6000 francs? I think your declaration² by letter would suffice me for this. * * * *

Here I find myself once more in the ever youthful rôle of a *débutant*. * * * Well, I see this much, that I must put up with it once more, and that if I am to dream of the realisation of my hopes for *The Nibelungs* it can only be upon the basis of successes in Paris. Whether that work and *Tristan* will ever be performed, no one in Germany cares at all, least of all my nearest friends. * * * *

451. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, STAYING IN ROME

PARIS, 19th December, 1859.

* * * * As you know, Hans³ wanted to perform the *Overture* to *Tristan* last winter, and asked me to make a close for it. At that time I had no idea for it, and it seemed so impossible that I flatly declined to do it. Since then I have written the third act and found a full close to the whole. The idea of intimating this close in advance came to me as a dawning presentiment of deliverance as I drew up a programme⁴ for my Parisian concert, the prospect of hearing the *Tristan Overture* played there being a special incentive to me. Well, it has turned out excellently and I am to-day sending you this mysterious, reassuring close, as the very best thing I can give you for your birthday. I have written the piece out for you very much as I play it to myself on the pianoforte. * * *

452. TO B. SCHOTT AND SONS, MAINZ

PARIS, 25th December, 1859.

* * I am much obliged to you for your favourable answer, and thank your esteemed firm for seriously considering my proposal that my *Rhinegold* should be accepted for publication. I acknowledge that the music-drama in question is only calculated to fill an entire

¹ See No. 424, note 1, p. 65.

³ See No. 393.

² It was given.

⁴ *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. xii.

evening by means of a new device, proper to the subject, according to which the finale of each act is characterised by a sustained change of some considerable duration (in the musical interlude), and this again makes it possible to keep the duration of performance, without injustice to a three-act opera, within the space of two and three-quarters to three hours, as is so often desired.

With regard to your other esteemed counter-suggestions, it only remains for me to attempt to come to an understanding upon the question of the honorarium. Whether, indeed, I shall succeed I do not know.

The honorarium I have asked of you is well considered. It is based on the supposition that exclusive rights in a dramatic work of mine, both at home and abroad, supplemented by the sale of rights in song extracts, saleable to French publishers, for example, for the issue of editions with French libretto, etc., will bring in considerable sums to-day and still more in the future. * * * *

As you * * have no objection to the amount of my demand in itself, but only wish me to abate it so that the pianoforte arrangement may be sold at a cheaper price, I take it that you are inclined to accept my estimate of the favourable chances in this business and that the above remarks are in a sense superfluous.

I am likewise unable to acquiesce in the reason alleged by you for wishing to make the price lower. If a cheaper issue of the pianoforte arrangement will make it accessible to less wealthy music-lovers, it simply means that you will have a wider market, and the profits on a greater number of cheap copies must, on any sensible view of the matter, equal those on the sale of a smaller number of dear copies. Indeed, experience has often taught that they tend to exceed them, provided that the work itself possesses a popular appeal, and this must be the presumption where a cheaper edition is thought suitable.

As a matter of fact, however, I consider that *The Rhinegold* and the whole of my *Nibelung* cycle is as sure to appeal to the German spirit for all time as any other national work of the past, and it is my expectation of this exceptional popularity which encourages me to believe in a strong reaction upon France and England, to whom the door to this particular type of *German* poetry can only be opened by *music*.

Should you be able to bring * * your views * * into accordance with mine * * it would simply remain for me to express the wish that the pianoforte arrangement, whatever the price at which you intend to sell it, should not fall short of the best and soundest standard as regards format and, at the least, should appear like

(to be brief) that of *Tristan and Isolde*. I would ask the same for the full score, which we should have to agree about ¹ according to circumstances at the time of the first performances of the work. * * * *

453. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, STAYING IN ROME

PARIS, 1st January, 1860.

* * * * There is not much to tell you about myself, child! A fellow who runs from door to door trying to get a suitable concert-hall ² ought not to concern you in Rome. * *

* * * On May 1st I think of opening ³ my German Opera season at the Salle Ventadour. The best German singers have all accepted with enthusiasm; Frau Ney, Meyer-Dustmann (Vienna), Tichatschek, Niemann, etc., have rallied to my standard and are even ready for pecuniary sacrifices. My opinion is that I shall soon be able to settle everything definitely. First will come *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*, during which time *Tristan* will be rehearsed and given from about June 1st to 16th. So—I must do what I can. But it doesn't sound Roman!

As you know, I had it in mind to confine myself to merely external activities for a while. Well, these are now forced upon me by the miscarriage of the *Tristan* scheme in Karlsruhe. All my present projects are connected with the possibility of getting *Tristan* performed. After that I shall probably let things slide again. I am looking no farther ahead. * * * *

454. TO B. SCHOTT AND SONS, MAINZ

PARIS, 7th January, 1860.

* * Accept my sincerest thanks for your recently notified acceptance of all my conditions for the sale to you of *The Rhinegold*. * * * *

Each subsequent drama in my *Nibelung* cycle shall, in the first place, be offered to you, and I pledge myself in advance to ask no more for any one of them than for *The Rhinegold*. If, nevertheless, you should demonstrably have made a poor bargain with this first work you will find me ready even to abate my demands. I have

¹ It was published in 1873, almost four years after the unfortunate first performance in Munich in 1869. See also No. 454.

² As early as November 1859 Wagner (in a letter published in *Wissen und Leben, Neu Schweitzer Rundschau*, 1923-4, vol. vii.) had asked the Grand Duke of Baden to get the Emperor Napoleon III. to put the concert-hall of the Grand Opera at his disposal. The intervention of the Grand Duke, however, was not successful and therefore Wagner chose the hall mentioned in No. 454.

³ See No. 448, note 3, p. 85.

only one thing further to ask you. Oblige me extremely by remitting me the whole amount, 1000 francs, at once—by return, indeed.

On this point I have something to tell you. I confess that—after your last letter—I foresaw that you would ultimately agree to my terms. The possibility of having the sum of money in question almost immediately at disposal, induced me to engage in an enterprise which I regard as of great importance for my future success in Paris, and on that account I decided to venture a considerable sum as soon as it was in my power to do so. It concerns, in the first place, three big concerts which I am preparing to give at the Salle Ventadour with a very sumptuous display of artistic talent. The expenses and commitments involved are tremendous, and I have already undertaken them all in the hope—of not being left in the lurch by you. * * * *

Accordingly, if I may consider all business matters as settled between us * * I will close by telling you of a project I have—as yet a secret from everyone—of arranging, if all goes well, a first performance of *The Rhinegold* in May next year at the Salle Ventadour, with a cast chosen from among the foremost German dramatic singers. * * * *

455. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, STAYING IN ROME

PARIS, 28th January, 1860.

* * * All my past experiences are as nothing compared to a realisation, a discovery, which I made at the first orchestral rehearsal for my concert, for these will determine all my remaining career, and their consequences dominate me tyrannically henceforth. I had my *Tristan Overture* played for the first time, and, as though scales had fallen from my eyes, I saw how immeasurably far I have travelled from the world during the last eight years. This little overture was so incomprehensively *new* to the musicians that I had to lead them from note to note as if searching for precious stones in a mine.

Bülow, who was there, admitted to me that at the attempted performances of this piece in Germany the public had taken it on faith, while the thing in itself had remained unintelligible. I succeeded in making it intelligible both to orchestra and public; indeed I have been assured it made a very deep impression. But don't ask me *how* I did it! Enough that I see now that I must not dream of further creative work till I have bridged this terrible gulf! I *must* perform my works first. And *what does that mean?*

Child, it means plunging me into an ocean of sacrifice and suffering

in which I shall probably perish. * * * This concert, and the lack of sufficient time for preparation, have shown me that I must become *rich*; I must be able to sacrifice thousands and thousands regardless, to purchase space, time and goodwill. As I am not rich, I must try to make myself so. I must let my earlier operas be given here in French and with the considerable profits derived therefrom set free my new works to the world. That is what lies before me—I have no other choice! Therefore, come death and annihilation, that is my task, and it is for that my daemon still gives me life! It would be folly to look beyond this! I look forward to nothing but the terrible pangs of bringing my last works into the world. * * * *

A word or two more about external events. After most unprecedented anguish, difficulty and effort, I brought off my first concert last Wednesday.¹ It was a festal evening; I cannot say otherwise. The orchestra, glowing with enthusiasm, hung on my nod, my wink.

They and the public received me with prolonged acclamations. Each of my pieces was accepted with a thrill of amazement and transport. The sensation caused was enormous—amazing experiences—conversions—journalists ("*La Patrie*"²) rushing at me, kissing my hand. I was tired to death. That evening I received my final consecration to suffering. I must, I must go on to this, my final task. Let the flower open its petals to the world and then perish; your task be to guard the chaste bud! * * *

456. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, STAYING IN ROME

PARIS, 12th February, 1860.

* * * * Let me just merely hint to you the troubles these concerts have brought on me, since I had no such *reliable* friend as you by my side at the time—how the practical difficulties and disappointments (which had to be carefully concealed from people in general) exceeded all calculation. Let me tell you further, that one main object of these concerts—namely, to induce a certain man³ to guarantee my German operatic enterprise—has not been attained, and that I am on the point of cancelling this undertaking, important as it is for my support in the immediate future (it was to have made possible for me the first performance of *Tristan*). I think of writing to put off my German singers, who had accepted with enthusiasm, thereby leaving the very kernel of my intentions unfulfilled for God knows how long. Then think to yourself whether the enthusiastic acclamations of the Parisian public could give me

¹ 25 January, 1860.

² Franck-Marie wrote for this paper.

³ Lucy, of Marseilles; cf. *My Life*, pp. 728, 729.

—any joy. As I say, I am going straight to the point of getting my *Tannhäuser* accepted by the Grand Opera. Fould, absolute monarch of the Grand Opera and Meyerbeer's intimate friend, eludes me; I must try to get at him through the Emperor himself—whose procurer he is, by the way. * * * *

457. TO B. SCHOTT AND SONS, MAINZ

PARIS, 2nd March, 1860.

* * * It is true that I have to face the fact that I have been obliged to lay out even more than the sum received from you to meet the really enormous expenses of the three concerts I have given, and yet I may consider my immediate object fully attained, since I have every reason to be satisfied with the impression made by my music on the Parisian public, and there can be no question but that the result will be the dissemination of my work through the length and breadth of France. * * *

I am quite definitely opposed to your project for including French words from the first in the pianoforte arrangement of *The Rhinegold*. I know the uncommon difficulty of getting a really good translation of my operas, and can only hope for an entirely successful one if I myself alter and adapt the voice parts to make them fit in quite naturally with the demands of French declamation. While reserving to myself this necessary freedom, I must also ask you at the same time for a special edition with the French libretto, since this is no mere question of giving the words in two languages but very frequently of entirely altering the notes of a song. To include both versions in one edition would necessarily lead to such disfigurement of the voice parts, that neither Frenchman nor German could easily read them, and in any case the whole would have an unsightly and muddled appearance.

This consideration would, perhaps, apply less to the full score, as this will come far less into the hands of the general public. * * *

In any case I must look over the full score again. I hope to find a means of indicating to less well-equipped theatres how the orchestra I had originally in mind might be reduced to come within the scope of the resources ordinarily at their command. * * *

458. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, STAYING IN ROME

PARIS, 3rd March, 1860.

* * * * My concerts here have put me into touch with some very devoted and sensible men.

Gaspérini, a gentle, highly cultured and talented physician (who, however, will probably soon devote himself entirely to literary and poetic work), distinguished and handsome in appearance and very warm-hearted, though lacking, perhaps, in natural vigour, was my man even before my arrival, and is now my most zealous and persistent champion. He writes for me in the *Courier du Dimanche*.

In Villot, I have won a person of great intellectual power, a mind uncommonly well-stored, free from all prejudice, serene and perceptive. This man, whose son has recently married, is *Conservateur du Musée du Louvre*, and as such has full charge of all the treasures of art. In an immense work which has cost him fifteen years of unremitting industry, he has written a history of the Louvre collection. And, now, consider that this man—long before I came to know him—possessed *all* my scores, had studied them exhaustively, and was rejoiced to get an early copy of the score of *Tristan* through my interest with Härtel's! He has surprised me greatly by the acuteness of his judgment, particularly in the matter of the capacities of his own nation, being externally a thorough Frenchman, while his mind towers above that of his race. He has a beautiful and distinguished face. I have not yet availed myself of his offer to study the treasures of the Louvre under his guidance, and it will probably be a long time before I am able to do so.

I may mention, among many others, the novelist Champfleury, whose pamphlet,¹ on his first impressions, I sent you. He has a very thoughtful, kindly, melancholy expression. His friend, the poet Baudelaire, has written me a couple of marvellous letters, but does not wish to be presented to me until he has completed some poems in which he intends to pay me homage.

I told you about Franck-Marie; his writings² about me are important, but he is still a stranger to me personally. Then there is a young painter, Gustave Doré, who has a great name here already; he has done a drawing, designed for an illustration, in which I am represented conducting an orchestra of spirits among mountains. Besides these, numbers of musicians and composers have proclaimed their enthusiasm for me, among them Gounod (a gentle, good, pure-hearted, but not profoundly talented man), Louis Lacombe, Léon Kreutzer, Stephen Heller. Saint-Saëns stands out as a very profound musician and is to play my scores to me in future.

One Herr Perrin, a painter of mark, at one time director of the *Opéra Comique* and probably the future director of the Grand Opera,

¹ *Richard Wagner* (1860).

² In the newspaper *La Patrie*; see No. 455, note 2.

is very devoted to me and has already written very finely about me in the *Revue Européenne*.

Berlioz has fallen a victim to envy. All my efforts to keep him my friend have been unsuccessful in face of the—to him unbearable—brilliant reception of my music. The truth is, he feels thwarted and injured by my appearance in Paris on the eve of a performance of his *Trojan Women*. In addition, his unlucky star has given him a bad wife, who allows herself to be bribed to influence her sick and suffering husband. His behaviour to me was an incessant alternation between friendly affection and recoil from the subject of his envy. Very late in the day, so that he should not have to take account of a second hearing of my music, he published his article, which you will probably have read. I thought it well to reply to his ambiguous, and indeed malicious, reference to the question of “the music of the future.” You will find my answer in the *Journal des Débats*, February 22nd.¹

Rossini has behaved better. A witticism on my lack of melody, assiduously reported even in the German papers, has been attributed to him, but he has now issued a denial on his own initiative, declaring that he knows nothing of mine but the *Tannhäuser March*, which gave him the greatest pleasure, and that all he has heard of me has won his deep respect for me. This earnestness on the part of the old epicure has surprised me.

Lastly, let me relate a conquest I have made of a field-marshal, namely Magnan, who came to all my concerts and evinced the greatest interest. As, unfortunately, it matters to me to know that a man of this kind gives a good account of me in certain circles, I went to see him and was really surprised by his expressions. He had to take up the cudgels for me with all kinds of people and could not see how anyone could hear in my music anything but simply music—such as Gluck and Beethoven wrote, only with the special stamp of the genius of “a Wagner.” * * * *

I am soon to lose the homely presence of Bülow. The poor lad wears himself out terribly running to and fro here, and I see little of him. He cannot come to see me very often, but it is a pleasure to me simply to know he is here. Ah! God, it does me good to be able to talk naturally, and only with him can I do so now. He is, and remains, wholly devoted to me, and I am often touched to discover how much trouble he takes for me in secret. He is unhappy when I tell him, “All that is no use!” But before he goes I will make him happy by saying you have sent him greetings through me.

¹ First printed in German in the *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. vii., p. 82. Berlioz's article appeared 9 February.

I must now see if I can strike some sort of bargain with someone to help me to repair a little the frightful devastation which the expenses of my concerts have left behind. It has been suggested that I should repeat the same concert three times in Brussels on condition that a small profit is guaranteed me. I shall probably be obliged to do this. * * * *

459. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

BRUSSELS, 29th March, 1860.

* * * * My lot at present is quaint enough! While my true path, the only thing I care for, remains permanently enshrouded in a very Teutonic fog of impossibility, Hans' diplomatic address has arranged all sorts of Parisian splendours for me, which float mockingly before my eyes like a *Fata Morgana*. What will come of the projected *Tannhäuser*, God only knows; in my heart of hearts I still do not really believe in it, and with good reason. I am more interested in the possibility of producing *Tristan* in Germany, and I am really thinking of settling my old dispute with Dresden if any moderately reasonable concessions are made to me. If I succeed in this I have my eye on Vienna as the theatre with the best singers and—a unique phenomenon of its kind—a competent musician as conductor,¹ a thing, as you know, not to be found anywhere else on German soil.

* * * I have been brought here under the silly illusion of attempting to recover some of the cost of those Paris extravagances by repeating my Parisian concerts in Brussels. But, of course, this excursion has only meant fresh expenses and has gained me nothing but a little publicity. Amongst my dearest personal conquests here, pride of place is to Herr A. Samuel, who is about to go to Germany and wished for an introduction to you. He has been uncommonly kind to me in deed and word. You will quickly take to him, too, and in that belief I recommend him to your welcome.

But I, too, received an introduction here through you. Frau Agnes Street-Klindworth brought me the note you gave her five years ago in London! Thank you, after all this time, for the very pleasant acquaintance that you so unexpectedly procured me in this manner. I was soon quite at home with her and Papa Klindworth, and owe these two people very pleasant memories. The old man entertained me delightfully with his amazing wealth of diplomatic anecdote.

I am returning to Paris to-day to get a closer view of my glittering

¹ Heinrich Esser.

misery. M. Royer demands a great ballet for the second act of *Tannhäuser*; you may imagine how that strikes home! My refuge from such demands is, at present, Princess Metternich, who is in high esteem with Fould, etc. So I must see whether I can shake off this ballet, for otherwise I should—of course—withdraw *Tannhäuser*.

Well, then, now you have a somewhat closer view of the joys of my existence! Do not delay to communicate some fragment of your life to me. Only an increasing scorn for the world and for life can make our relations with this wretched life and world at all bearable. If these relations can be maintained with good humour, it is possible to hold out for a while. But when one sees how little there is in this world that can stand the acid test, when one observes over and over again the frantic superficiality, the incredible frivolity, the sheer pursuit of pleasure in every person and every place about one, one's own earnestness often seems very comic. And it is this sense of absurdity—in my case at least—which often puts me into the only tolerable frame of mind!— * * *

460. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, STAYING IN ROME

PARIS, 10th April, 1860.

* * * * I cannot contradict my new French friends when they regard the possibility, the prospective certainty, that *Tannhäuser* will make a great impression on the Paris public, as an occasion of unprecedented importance, and ascribe to it a significance beyond all conceivable comparison.

I really cannot blame any cool observer of the life of the talented but incredibly neglected French nation, who is able to take an interest in whatsoever may serve to develop and enable this race, if he sees in the acceptance of a French *Tannhäuser* a moment of vital import for the cultural capacities of these people. Think how wretched is the condition of all French art, when poetry is really entirely foreign to this race and is only conceived of as eloquence and rhetoric. The complete exclusiveness of the French language, its incapacity to absorb the lacking poetic element by translation from another tongue, leaves only one way open by which poetry can enter, and that is by music. But the Frenchman is not really musical, and all his music has come to him from abroad. From the first the French style of music has developed solely by contact with Italian and German music and is really nothing more than the point of contact of these two styles.

To be accurate, all that Gluck taught the French was to bring music into line with the rhetorical style of French *tragédie*, in

which true poetry has really no part. Consequently, since his time, the Italians have been almost entirely masters of the field; for interest has been centred on rhetorical mannerisms, and has equally neglected true music and true poetry. This neglect, increasing up to the present day, is incredible. * * * *

* * * * These Paris concerts have put me into an impossible position. I only undertook Brussels in order to ease things a little, but the contrary resulted. * * I hear not one word from Germany, and if I am ever in my life to see *Tristan* and *The Nibelungs* I must devise some miracle to uphold me in the waters of this blessed existence. So, then, I accept the hopes of my Parisian friends, in particular those of my operatic director,¹ and (since all these good things, unfortunately, are still somewhat in the future) I am not at all disinclined to sell myself to a Russian general [von Saburov], who is coming here shortly to persuade me to make a *Tannhäuser* excursion to St. Petersburg.² I invite you to share my mirth! * * *

In the meantime I must cultivate the right mood for—writing a big ballet. What do you say to that? Do you despair of me? Well, you will ask my pardon for that when once you hear and see it. Only this much now—not one note, not one word of *Tannhäuser* will be altered. But a ballet is imperiously demanded and this ballet is to appear in the second act, because the subscribers to the opera always come to the theatre rather late after a heavy dinner and never at the beginning. Well, I told them that I could not take my orders from the Jockey Club and would withdraw my work. Now, however, I mean to help them out of their difficulty. The opera need not begin till eight o'clock and then they shall have the unholy Venusberg done properly!

This Court of Madame Venus was manifestly the weak part of my work. Lacking a good ballet, I resorted at the time merely to a few coarse pencil-strokes, and thereby missed a great deal. I left the impression of the Venusberg quite flat and indefinite, with the result that an impressive background was missing for the subsequent tragedy. The peremptory reminders and warnings, which come in later and should fill us with a sense of horror (because they are the first indication of the course of the action), failed almost wholly of their effect and significance; fear and persistent foreboding were not induced. But I recognise now that at the time when I wrote *Tannhäuser* I could not have written the kind of thing that is needed here * *. Having now written the ultimate transfiguration of Isolde, I can at last find the right close to the overture of *The Flying Dutchman*, and the horror of this Venusberg. One becomes almighty

¹ Alphonse Royer.

² Nothing came of this.

by degrees if one only goes on playing with the world. Naturally, I shall have to work everything out myself, so that I can prescribe every least *nuance* to the ballet-master. True, the dance alone can operate and portray here, but what a dance! People will be amazed at all that I have evolved from it. I have made no notes as yet, but I have attempted a few preliminary indications here. Do not be surprised at their occurring in a letter to Elizabeth.¹ * * * *

461. TO KARL KLINDWORTH, LONDON

[PARIS], 21st April, 1860.

* * * Zychlinsky has spoken to me and told me that you want to know my opinion as to whether you should consent to do further arrangements of *The Rhinegold*. Now, please, do not on any account be over-scrupulous about it. I cannot restrain the publisher from having all kinds of arrangements made; besides, once the full score and the perfect pianoforte arrangement have been published, it is all the same to me in what other form my works are presented to the common herd. If I have any interest in the matter, it is merely that *these* arrangements as well should be made with insight and knowledge. Indeed, I am of opinion that they might be very important and interesting coming from an experienced artist, but meaningless if a common ignorant *arrangeur* is chosen to do them. Accordingly, I am even inclined to *ask* you to agree to Schott's suggestions. The fact that the orchestra plays so important a part, and is for the most part as coherent as for a symphony, will make your task easy. * * * *

462. TO HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW, EDWARD AVENARIUS, LEIPZIG

PARIS, 10th May, 1860.

* * * I am anxious that my *Nibelung* pieces should be published as poems very soon—at once. A pianoforte arrangement of the first piece—*The Rhinegold*—is to come out immediately, and I want at the same time to lay the entire poem before the public. Still, I will not on any account let this poem be published by the music-publisher (Schott, of Mainz, in this instance). That would mean that, being regarded as opera libretti, they would reach few but musicians, as happened to my earlier poems. They would be judged as such, and, as you know the poem, I need hardly labour the point with you that such would be a very senseless *point de départ*. Accordingly I am looking for a publishing house which will from the first give

¹ Frau Wesendonck had become Tannhäuser's "Holy Elizabeth" for Wagner.

the book the right standing, and I have reason to believe that Cotta would be the best man for my purpose. I want someone who will offer my poem to Cotta in a manner to recommend it and catch his attention for it. A well-known writer would do this best, I think, but I am not closely acquainted with any.

You, as I hear, are still a kind of bookseller * * so I ask you very cordially if you will take the matter in hand. * * * I expect, particularly after a while, a great, a widespread popular success for this poem, even among the reading public. Such a success can best be prolonged and increased by future performances of the individual pieces at the theatres. I have accorded the music-publisher of *The Rhinegold* the provisional right to print the *separate* pieces (in cheap editions) *without* stage directions as text-books for theatrical performances. I have made a special reservation for myself of a comprehensive edition of the poem as a whole, and it is this which I am tendering to the publisher I have in mind. I believe that the book will arouse great interest at its first appearance. Then, if in the first place the pianoforte arrangement of *The Rhinegold* succeeds with the public, musicians will be most anxious to get to know the *whole* poem.¹ The demand will increase when the performance of *The Rhinegold* actually takes place, and will do so again later at each successive performance of the following parts which, as you see, I have—resigned myself to producing singly and gradually. In this way quite unusual fresh chances are open to the enterprises of the poem's publisher.—I believe that I must insist on an edition of two thousand copies, each copy (handsomely got up) to be priced at something up to two thalers gross. My honorarium for this edition should be calculated on the customary ratio. New stipulations for each new edition after that. * * * *

You will, no doubt, be so kind as to lend the copy which I gave you and Cecilie to the publisher temporarily for examination. As soon as he comes to a decision, I will revise the manuscript quickly and send it straight from here to the press. * * * *

* * Negotiations under promising auspices are going forward with Dresden about my return to Germany. In the middle of the coming season *Tannhäuser* is to be given (by command) at the Grand Opera here and, for this, without knowing it, I had Princess Metternich to thank. As a result, everything is at my disposal. Only I still can make no money at all and have been obliged to pay out of my own pocket to a disastrous extent. * * *

¹ See No. 449 and No. 390, note, p. 32.

463. TO MALWIDA VON MEYSENBURG, PARIS

PARIS, 20th May, 1860.

DEAR FRIEND,

Your letter of to-day was doubly welcome as, besides the enclosure, it brought me your address again. * * * I beg you to give my kindest regards to Madame Szemere and to tell her how particularly sorry I am to be unable as yet to return her the money so kindly advanced to me, since there is not the least change in my situation at present. I have received no reassuring news at all from any quarter. Consequently I leave it to Madame Szemere as, unfortunately, she is so deeply involved in my circumstances, to address inquiries to Paris. Only I should prefer under all circumstances that an appearance should be maintained of my having remained in ignorance of the proposal communicated to me for indemnifying me for the loss sustained through my concerts. It was one thing for me to ask Madame Szemere, whom I held to be very wealthy and quite in a position to assist me from her own pocket, for the necessary loan which I have every prospect of being able to repay in a few years' time, but it would have been quite another to have encouraged a collection on my behalf with the object of making me a *present* of the sum which was lost. * * * *

464. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

PARIS, 22nd May, 1860.

* * * * To-day—I have read Berlioz's latest pamphlet¹ * * * on *Fidelio*. I have not met Berlioz since my concert. It used always to be I who had to visit or invite him—he never troubled himself about me. It made me very sad. I was not angry with him, I only asked whether the dear God would not have done better to leave women out of his creation. They are seldom good for anything; as a rule they injure us without any ultimate advantage to themselves. In Berlioz's case I had another opportunity of studying, with anatomical exactitude, the capacity of a bad woman for ruining a really brilliant man to her heart's content, and debasing him to the point of absurdity. What satisfaction can the unfortunate man find in it all? Perhaps the sad one of giving the worst side of his nature opportunity for a really dazzling display. Since then, as I said, I have not seen Berlioz again. Then to-day I read his article. It rejoiced me so, that despite the certainty of being colossally misunderstood by him, I wrote to him * * in my horrible French. * * *

* * * If he mistakes me this time, I fear I shall have at least given him good reason to do so by my French! * * * Berlioz's

¹ *Journal des Débats*, 22 May.

article on *Fidelio* shows me plainly the unfortunate man's lonely position. His sensibilities are so acute and so profound that the world is bound to injure him and exacerbate his wounded feelings till these feelings and the influences which surround him lead him strangely astray. Indeed, he becomes estranged from himself and unconsciously he wounds himself! But it was just this insane spectacle which led me to recognise that this highly talented man can only be really befriended by men of high talent, and this in turn showed me that, in these days of ours, we three fellows alone have anything in common with each other, because we are alike—that is, you, he, and I! But it is the last thing one dares say to him; if he hears it he will lash out. A tormented god like that is a poor devil!—* * * *

465. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, STAYING IN ROME

PARIS, 23rd May, 1860.

* * I remembered Liszt as well. I do not know a single characteristic of his which does not make him seem truly lovable to me. Such shadows as there are in his nature are not a matter of character but rather, occasionally, of intellect. On the latter side, he is easily influenced, and is led astray through weakness. I have not written to him for a long time¹; even my great grief at the loss of his son² was conveyed to him only through others. I cannot write to a man I love so well except intimately—I have no business matters to discuss with him. But the certainty that our intimacies will always be exposed to the eyes of a *second* person³ is not to be borne. It at once leads to calculation and deceit. That is how things are, however. Liszt has become a man without secrets and it is not his inner self but his palpably abused weakness which has reduced him to this unlovely dependence. I have ultimately sadly told him—or rather, I am sorry to say, both of them!—that I can no longer write to him (or them!).⁴ * * * *

466. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, STAYING IN ROME

PARIS, 5th June, 1860.

* * * * My deepest interests as an artist urge me to the speediest possible production of *Tristan*; to the plan for producing *Tannhäuser*

¹ Obviously Wagner does not count the preceding letter. The last (published) letters to Liszt before this one are dated 23 November, 1859, and 29 March, 1860.

² See No. 348, vol. i, p. 341.

³ Wagner had long been on bad terms with Princess Caroline von Sayn-Wittgenstein.

⁴ Cf. close of letter of 23 November, 1859, but the close of the letter of 22 May, 1860, contradicts this.

in Paris—a matter of artistic indifference to me—I am inclined by dislike of knuckling under to my German circumstances. Everything is shaping well for the Parisian plan; it is being taken very seriously and everything is placed at my disposal. The management are building great hopes upon it, and it has become a matter of courtesy between the Emperor [Napoleon] and Princess Metternich. Consequently things are moving, and moving on their own. It has scarcely cost me a step; the thing has been arranged almost entirely behind my back. * * *

—On the other hand, every possible way to a production of *Tristan* seems to be bolted and barred. The Saxon ambassador here [von Seebach], a very good fellow, is in Dresden at the moment, and will endeavour personally to arrange my affair with the King there. As yet I can scarcely believe in his success. Were that to come, however, and were I shortly to be free to enter Germany, I should not know for the moment of any theatre with the resources necessary for my work. Vienna is in a state of complete *decadence*, and even Dresden, which offers me the best personnel, might very well remain closed for the moment against my personal co-operation, which is indispensable. * * * *

So I shall probably remain riveted to Paris for the time being, where I am as miserable as can be. In sheer mockery, as it were, of my position here, the following trial was laid upon me the other day. A Russian general [von Saburov], director of the Imperial Theatre, came here and laid these alternatives before me: either to go to St. Petersburg next September, stay there the winter, produce *Tannhäuser*, conduct big concerts and receive 50,000 francs guaranteed, half to be paid at once, or—nothing at all!—Every adjustment, proposed by me to fit in with the performance of *Tannhäuser* arranged here for the same date, was declared impossible. * * * After all, I could not sell myself so entirely for money's sake. I remained true to Paris, shouldered the incalculable wretchedness of my Parisian life, till the time for the performances of my opera * * and drifted back to my Newton Street. The street is about to be sunk $3\frac{1}{2}$ metres to bring it to a level with the new boulevard crossing it, but this ghastly circumstance gives me occasion to ease my present situation by cancelling my lease, which they will have to allow me to do, even making me a certain amount of compensation.¹ Accordingly, from October next I shall rent a smaller lodging in town, nearer the Opera, altogether without consideration for peace and comfort, as I must now forsake the Muse for some time to come. * * * *

¹ See end of No. 477.

467. TO HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW, EDWARD AVENARIUS, LEIPZIG

PARIS, 6th June, 1860.

* * My very best thanks ¹ for your courteous and careful answer. I have since followed your advice and applied to Cotta direct. He has declined on the pretext of the fear of war. I foresaw his answer, though not perhaps the fear of war. Believe me, it is not laziness on my part if I renew my request to you to take up this business. Even the sending of the book from here, puts fatal obstacles in my way. I have not yet got my copy back from Cotta; it may have got lost and it is *the last* I possess.

Well then, even supposing you prefer J. Weber or some Berlin publisher, I would beg you to regard yourself as fully empowered by me to conclude this business. Consider how inexperienced I am in dealing with book-publishers. * * * *

Best regards to Cecilie. Her letter was a great joy to me. It is, and remains, a serious matter that she should not once in eleven years have managed to visit her brother in exile. To hear from each other by fits and starts—every three or four years or so—is no kind of a substitute. * * * *

468. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, STAYING IN ROME

PARIS, 17th June, 1860.

MY FRIEND!

* * * Since the breakdown of my St. Petersburg negotiations I can no longer forbear to tell you that it was you who, without knowing it, helped me in the first terrible necessity to which my three Parisian concerts reduced me.

Just as it became necessary to pay at once ² the expenses of those concerts, which eventually amounted to over 11,000 francs, * * the music-publisher [Schott], who had approached me about *The Rhinegold*, answered my letter, complying quite unexpectedly with the terms I offered them and sending me the required honorarium forthwith in a bill of exchange on Paris.

At the same time I heard from St. Petersburg that the director of the Imperial Theatre [von Saburov] would shortly come to Paris to try to get me to go to St. Petersburg next winter on advantageous terms.

You were far away and my situation was impossible; the concerts—once advertised—*had* to be carried through.

I spent the honorarium on *The Rhinegold* on the supposition

¹ See No. 462.

² Frau Kalergis, however, had made up this sum!

that I should be able to repay ¹ you at once from the profits on the prospective St. Petersburg engagements; not till then should you be told of what had happened.

Now this prospect, too, has been closed to me. Accordingly I can no longer defer acquainting you with the circumstances.

I must dismiss as illusory every possibility of being able to reimburse you soon by other means. There is nothing left for me but to give you a receipt for the amount agreed between us for the last piece of *The Nibelungs*, whereby the 6000 francs for *The Rhine-gold* may count as paid back to you. I shall finish this piece yet; for were this not my destiny I do not know what should keep me alive when I daily long for death with all my heart. * * * *

469. TO MALWIDA VON MEYSENBUG, PARIS

PARIS, 22nd June, 1860.

* * * I have had much hardship to combat in my life, and the ironical combination of complete impecuniosity with an intractable temperament like mine, has at all times given rise to bitter conflicts. No one understands this rightly, and yet it is obvious enough. For instance, let anyone observe my conduct now, *now* when I should be snatching at anything which might lighten my burdens and yet can so little condescend to concessions that I told the director of the Opera [Royer] yesterday that *Tannhäuser* should either be given as it is (without the ballet in Act II.) or not be given at all. Now that you know my situation, you are in the best position to judge what such obstinacy means. For I must confess that in the eight years during which my operas have been given in Germany, I have never known anything like my present circumstances; I always had some income and could live somehow. Now, however, my earlier operas are quite played out, my new ones held up, enormous losses and—no one to help me! All I ask is for credit during a period of cessation! Impossible! I lay my heart bare and get nothing for it but shame. I read in the papers that I have got 10,000 francs, but the accompanying mockery is all I have ever seen of it. * * * I have had, day by day, to stave off summonses, with most humiliating wants in the house, and my wife agitated and sleepless. She has been ordered to the baths at Soden and I cannot provide the money. And so it goes on, and will do, for another six months at least, that is if it *can* go on. And this happens to me, who am always being told on all hands of the enthusiasm I arouse here,

¹ See No. 424. On 23 November, 1860, Wesendonck wrote upon the promissory note given him by Wagner on 1 February, 1860, upon *Siegfried's Death* that he had relinquished the first piece of *The Ring of the Nibelungs* for this one.

there and everywhere, etc. Of all the people to whom I turned I had the best right to think of Madame Szemere¹ as the one being able actually to rise up and help me. As things have turned out, I may truthfully assure you that I have acquired a great respect for Madame Szemere. When I remember how you came to me on that day of urgent need and handed me the big sum necessary, I cannot but recognise that it was she alone who provided it. Tell her that. Do not be surprised that I do not sing *your* praises, although I saw *your* hand in what Madame Szemere did. * * * There can be no more talk about the subscription—everything here has failed root and branch. * * * There is nothing left me but my debt, my gratitude and my regret as regards Madame Szemere (that I can't repay her at once), and further—the hell from which I have not the remotest inkling how to escape. It is still a matter of 5000 francs, the remaining deficit, till I get to the performance of *Tannhäuser*.

Nevertheless, I have been able to maintain my interest in Garibaldi all this time, and I assure you I always open the evening paper with eagerness. As you very rightly remark, it is the only thing which could cheer me, Art being unavailing in situations like mine, for one needs *freedom* for that and not merely the will to be free. In the same way, in such moods I cannot get mental freedom for reading about art, and then Plutarch offers me the necessary distraction. I had, indeed, been much struck again by his life of Timoleon, which I lighted upon quite by chance. This life has the exceedingly rare distinction of being entirely happy to the very end, a most exceptional case in history. * * Well, there were a number of points of contact which recently made me connect Garibaldi with Timoleon. He is *still* fortunate! Can it be possible that he is to be spared from the very extremes of bitterness? From my heart I wish it may be so. Yet I often tremble when I see him as a mere fly in the huge European spider's web. Many possibilities remain open; perhaps the fly is too big and strong. He ought not to count much upon his *people* but very much upon his Alpine *chasseurs*! For the rest let treason, and the skill to direct it, help him. Through the wickedness of the wicked, one sometimes conquers the insolence of the wicked. * * * *

470. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BERLIN

[PARIS, 22nd July, 1860.]

* * * * As I have * * so much to do now with this early *opus* [*Tannhäuser*], I cannot bring myself to let palpable weaknesses

¹ See No. 463.

stand. On a similar occasion, I think I did *The Flying Dutchman* no harm by adding a new close, and I now intend to revise the Venusberg scene. I recognise the weakness in the choreographic first scene, and not less in the stiffness of the part of Venus. Accordingly, I shall write entirely new, much more richly developed music for Scene I. (call it ballet), revise, and more particularly amplify, the Venus rôle very considerably, retaining the best *motifs*, to which end I have composed some new verses for the close of the scene. I hope to excite greater interest in Venus and to lead up to Tannhäuser's final invocation of Mary in a way to make for a true understanding of the anguish of soul which brings him to it. * * * *

The reason why *I*, for my part (having the sole right to be dissatisfied), am letting a French translation suffice instead of the German original, is that I am giving the Paris performance in honour of the first and only Prince [Napoleon] who has given me the chance of hearing one of my operas these eleven years, and that in spite of Meyerbeer and all his embattled hosts of Jewry.—* * * *

471. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

PARIS, 22nd July, 1860.

* * * * I feel that I am clean. I know in my innermost soul that I always worked for others, never for myself; my perpetual sufferings bear me witness.

But joy? Joy is nothing to me now! And that is my consolation. Each joy that I detected in myself would become my accuser and would destroy my proud right to scorn it.

And so to-day I can tell you with an odd sense of satisfaction that the news from Germany, of *the annulment of my banishment*, which I received a few days ago, has left me quite cold and indifferent. * * *

I have a friend, however, whom I grow to love better and better. He is my old Schopenhauer, so morose to all appearance, and yet so profoundly imbued with love! * * * And how beautiful it is that the old man knows nothing at all of what he is to me, or of what I am to myself through him!

And now let me remember a friend of quite another kind. You may laugh, but I am speaking of a true angel who is ever at my side—a being unalterably friendly, who never so much as looks at me without lavishing a deluge of joy and caresses upon me. He is the little dog which you once sent to me from your sick-bed! * * *

472. TO THE SAME

[PARIS, early in August, 1860.]

What a poet am I! Heaven help me, I am growing quite arrogant! This everlasting translation of *Tannhäuser* has made me so conceited already. It is just this task which forces me to go through my work word by word, that has shown me how concise and unalterable the poem is as it stands. Take away a word, a meaning, and my translator, and myself, have both of us to admit that an essential *motif* has been sacrificed. * * * I can better improve on the music. In particular, I am giving the orchestra more expressive and richer passages here and there. * * *

Prose translations of the four pieces, *The Dutchman*, *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin* and *Tristan*, are soon to be published,¹ and I intend to write a preface² for the special purpose of giving my friends here some elucidation of the nature of my tendencies in art. I have just been through these translations, which necessitated making a fresh detailed examination of my poems. Yesterday *Lohengrin* touched me very deeply and I cannot but think it the most tragic of all poems, because only a terribly wide outlook on the universe makes the basis of reconciliation discoverable.

Nothing but the profound assumptions of the doctrine of the transmigration of souls could reveal to me the moment, rich in consolation, at which all things at length unite on the same peak of redemption. * * According to the beautiful Buddhist belief, the only explanation of the spotless purity of Lohengrin is that he is the reincarnate Parzival, who won to purity by his own efforts. In the same way Elsa would reach Lohengrin through rebirth. Accordingly, my theme for *The Victors* seemed to me to be the continuation and fulfilment of *Lohengrin*. In it Savitri (Elsa) achieves Ananda utterly. All the terrible tragedies of life are but due to the divisions inherent in time and space. * * * *

Tristan is, and remains, a miracle to me! I find it more and more difficult to understand how I could have done such a thing. As I read it through again, I had to open my eyes wide! I shall have to pay terribly for this work one day if I mean to have it performed to perfection. I can see that most incredible sufferings lie before me. For I do not disguise from myself that I have far overstepped the limits of our capacity for performance. The wonderful geniuses

¹ Published in Paris late in November 1860, and dated 1861, under the title *Quatre poèmes d'opéras*.

² The German original of this preface, *The Music of the Future*, was published simultaneously by J. J. Weber, Leipzig (*Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. vi.). See also No. 476.

of actors who alone would be equal to the task are incredibly rare in the world nowadays. And yet I cannot resist the attempt! If I only hear the orchestra!!

Parzival has been stirring in me much again of late. I am coming to see more of it and more clearly. When it is fully ripe, the writing of this poem will be an inexpressible delight to me. But many a good year may pass before then! Moreover, I should like to leave everything to the poem itself. I hold back as long as I can and only think about it when it comes upon me with power! When that is so, this miraculous process of generation makes me forget all my misery.—* * * *

473. TO HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW, EDWARD AVENARIUS, LEIPZIG

SODEN, 13th August [1860].

* * * *—I should have liked to write to you more at leisure about the publishing affair. Still I will just touch hastily upon the main issue. I should be willing to sign a contract for a division of the profits, but how in the world could I be sure that I should not be cheated, unless the publisher were my special friend? No one believes in the honesty of a publisher in the rôle of publisher. My own experience has not been fortunate in this regard. Härtel's idea was to share the profits on *Lohengrin*. Pianoforte arrangements of this opera have now been selling all over Europe and America for years and yet Härtel's—have not drawn enough profits to have aught to share with me!! How such businesses are maintained, how Härtel's are able to keep a house over their heads and pay for clothes, must remain a riddle if nothing accrues from such undertakings even after ten years.—My mind would be more at ease if, provisionally, there were to be only a small edition of five hundred copies, but, on the one hand, I hold so small an edition impractical, for naturally the thing would only be sent to musical managers and other musicians—and would not reach the right people, while, on the other, are you willing to stand surety to me that, in case of a big demand, Weber would not issue a fresh edition without saying anything to me—or would not have a greater number printed from the first? I am afraid that on these lines I shall *never* draw a penny from my *Nibelung* poem! I would accept these conditions, and others like them, if *you* would publish the work. Think it over! If you can do it, my doubts will be allayed. I really have reason to put little trust in publishers, etc. Only think that I am still out of pocket on the publication of *Rienzi*, *The Flying Dutchman* and *Tannhäuser*!! Is not my mistrust fully justified?—* * * *

474. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

FRANKFORT [ON MAIN], 13th August [1860].

* * * It is heavenly to think that I shall see you on Thursday! Surely it won't be too much for you to come as far as Baden-Baden? * * * I can spend the whole of Friday there and need not set out for Paris till Saturday. That is the plan I am driven to. One chief motive of my expedition is to wait on the Princess of Prussia, as Seebach assured me that it was really her recent very urgent intercession which I have to thank for at last bringing the King of Saxony to his senses. Seebach recommended me to write to her, whereupon I decided forthwith that it would be preferable to present myself to her in person, as I should like * * to find out whether I may hope for any future help from this lady in producing my new works. The fact that I shall have to consider this question more closely now, is another reason for wanting very much to have a talk with you. * * * *

475. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, ZURICH

PARIS, 23rd August, 1860.

* * * * I am very much overworked and often hardly know whether I am on my head or my heels.

Added to that I spent a few days on the Rhine last week, going to wait on the Princess of Baden-Baden * *. She made a good impression on me, expressed herself with animation and sense, and assured me very warmly of her support. Just previously, however, I had received such discouraging accounts of the state of the Berlin Opera that I did not feel disposed to go into further detail with the Princess on the subject of getting my new works produced in Berlin. * * * I did not, unfortunately, feel the faintest trace of emotion at setting foot on German soil again! I must have grown very cold, God knows! * * * *

476. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

PARIS, 13th September, 1860.

* * * * You are quite wrong * * in believing that nothing but a special occasion could induce me to visit Weimar. On the contrary, the truth is that I abide by what I said to the Grand Duke years ago at Lucerne,¹ when he asked me whether, in case I was amnestied, I could make up my mind to stay in Weimar now and then. I told him that your society would always attract me to Weimar, so that

¹ See No. 357, vol. i., p. 350.

as long as you were there I should come frequently. Now you will see that the fact that I no longer count on the Grand Duke as the patron of my artistic productions, can happily alter nothing in my connection with Weimar; on the contrary, I may hope that I shall not have to pay for the blessing of your society by participation in what would undoubtedly be disappointing artistic activities (I am speaking of opera). Be assured that I look forward more joyfully than ever to the day when I can spread my sail for Altenburg!—

My position as regards Germany is otherwise still very unsatisfactory. As you know, I am neither amnestied nor pardoned, and all that has been promised me is a suspension of extradition proceedings when I wish to enter German territory for the purpose of producing my works, the Central Government having given its consent and having secured agreement with the Saxon Government. * * * Accordingly, I cannot dream of important and sufficient measures in my favour on the part of any court, and my plans for the performance of my latest works have not been very much advanced. This is the more evident in that, from another aspect, the condition of our largest operatic theatres is extremely discouraging. * * *

Where my *Tristan* is first to see the light, therefore, remains at this moment an impenetrable mystery to me. Its birth would probably be easiest for me if I were to appoint the King of Hanover as midwife. Niemann declares that the King would at once engage any singer, male or female, whom I might require for a model presentation of my work, if that presentation were to take place in Hanover. That would be something. This King appears to be liberal and splendid in his passion for art; and nothing else is any use to me. Let us hope that he will not find my political situation an obstacle.

For the present, my Parisian enterprise occupies me wholly, and mercifully obscures my view of the wretchedness of my outlook in Germany. I do not know what rumours are current with you as to difficulties in my way; perhaps they are well meant, but they are mistaken. * * * Even I am taking the thing seriously. I am removing weaknesses which I recognise in the [*Tannhäuser*] score. I delight in rewriting the great Venus scene, and hope greatly to improve the work thereby. In addition the ballet scene will be done on a new and larger scale designed by myself.—

Unfortunately I have not yet been able actually to begin this necessary task. Up till my recent Rhine excursion the translation itself kept me busy, and on my return I had to do a little piece of literary work which I have only just finished. M. Frédéric Villot,

whom Hans has probably told you about, asked me to publish an edition of my operatic poems in a prose translation and to add a preface¹ explaining my ideas. This I have now done. I think the work will appear early in October at latest. Everything is now ready for rehearsals, but, unfortunately, I had at the last moment to object to the baritone. Fould had at once to give orders for the engagement of another singer, but the right man has not yet been found and the result is a slight delay which, however, has not called forth the slightest trace of ill-will in any quarter. Meyerbeer, who is at work in his quiet way, cannot after all harmfully affect the Emperor or the cause; however, he is trying to turn the good engagements which have been made for me to his own future advantage. Well, I do not grudge him that. That fellow has no initiative. * * * *

I think of Germany now, and of my proposed enterprises there some day, with nothing but horror. God forgive me, but there I see nothing but pettiness, meanness, self-conceit and pretence of solid worth which has no real foundation. There is lack of thoroughness in everyone and everything, so that I actually prefer to see *Le Pardon de Ploërmel* [Meyerbeer] here in Paris, rather than over there under the branches of the famous, the glorious German oak! I must also confess to you that I set foot on German soil again without the slightest emotion, except, at most, some amazement at the banality and incivility of the talk I heard around me. Believe me, we have no Fatherland! If I am "German" it is because I carry my Germany within me—and this is fortunate, for the garrison at Mainz did not exactly arouse my enthusiasm.—

Bülow seems to be angry with me. I recently got annoyed with him² for disappointing my optimistic hopes for him. There is so much I do not understand, and this should be forgiven me on account of my curious way of life. Hans seems to me to fritter himself away, to undertake too much, thus losing the compactness and concentration necessary to a proper man. I cannot see a thing like this going on without feeling very sorry. On the other hand, I am very wrong not to accept so good a friend just as he is. And how much reason I have to acknowledge Bülow's friendship! Therefore he must not take offence with me and he must do as he likes; only sometimes he might be a little more punctual with letters!—

Believe me, in spite of my Parisian environment, I live a terribly lonely life, whereas I cannot think of you except as continually in society, even in Weimar. Perhaps I imagine a great many things

¹ See No. 472.

² No such letter has been published.

there quite mistakenly. At least, Mme. Street made me think so recently, when she wrote to me about her visit to you. She said you were very depressed, though quite well otherwise. Well, I could not see why you should be particularly cheerful and yet this news was a blow to me. * * * The last thing I should be inclined to think is that the stupid reception your works have met with here and there could be the cause of your depression, but it seems to me that no one could know better than you that this animosity has nothing to do with your work, but always with some false light in which you appear to the mob. That very light which shows you to be an exceptional phenomenon easily misconceived, is now and then too brilliant, especially for German eyes. Consequently I think you are right to keep in the shade as much as possible and let your works display themselves for a time without worrying about them in the least. * * * *

477. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

PARIS, 30th September, 1860.

* * * *—Just imagine, I am struggling with all my might at the moment to compose some music. Venus must learn to sing better! Shall I be successful? * * * *

Ah, if the heavens would but clear again! How have I borne it these twelve months? But there is no help for it—despite the heavens and the autumn weather I must compose. And I have been writing as well. I shall send you the book soon.¹ The verses for *Tannhäuser* are not yet properly finished in German; I give you the rough draft from which the French version has been made, and I had to compose on these French verses! * * * And “Madame Care” remains ever faithful!

But do not run away with a false impression. I would not go on with any project perforce. For example, I would not dream of troubling myself about this Paris *Tannhäuser* if I had to meet opposition or even to make sacrifices. On the contrary, I put a good face on this silly game simply because I am met with such goodwill. * * * The pianoforte rehearsals have now begun. Time is well spent. Every detail is submitted to my examination. I rejected the scheme of *décor* three times before it suited me. Now all these things will be perfect, and the performance itself—even if it falls short of the ideal—will at any rate be the best there has ever been, or is likely to be for some time to come. I rely principally on my hero—Niemann. The man has inexhaustible capacity. He is still

¹ See No. 472.

very much a rough diamond and instinct has hitherto counted for everything with him. All he needs to do now, is to put himself under my guidance for months on end. Everything is to be studied to the last jot and tittle. For Elizabeth, too, I have a half-tamed young singer—Mlle. Sax. Her voice is marvellous and unspoiled and her talent very rich. She is entirely devoted to me. Venus—Madame Tedesco—specially engaged for me, has a superb face for her rôle, though her figure is a little too voluptuous. Her talent is very considerable and well suited to the part. My last difficulties were with Wolfram. I have finally got them to engage a Herr Morelli, a man of stately appearance with a most lovely voice. I must see next how he rehearses. Fortunately, the opera will not be given until I am perfectly satisfied with the results of rehearsal. * * *

I am already a favourite at the Opera. There is no longer any constraint in my relations with them. They have begun to understand me, they oppose me in nothing and are delighted with what we prepare to do.—* * *

* * *—I have already worked a little on the music for my new scene. Curious! At the time I wrote *Tannhäuser*, I was quite unable to portray the full intensity, the passion, of woman: what I might almost call *ecstatic femininity*. I have had to sweep all away and frame all afresh. Really, I am horrified at my former scene-painter's Venus! Well, it will be better this time—especially if this fog presages good weather. But the blithe and gay side of *Tannhäuser* is all good, and there I can alter nothing—the distilled essence of everything that has the flavour of the saga about it is in it.—*Tannhäuser's* sorrow and his penance, utterly successful—the grouping perfect. It is only in the passionate passages that I have need to retouch a little here and there. For instance, I have replaced a very insipid passage for the violins in *Tannhäuser's* outbreak at the close of Act II. by a new one which is satisfactory, though very difficult. I can lay anything upon my orchestra here; it is the first in the world. * * *

I have become extremely disinclined to make plans. I have not even made any for a performance of *Tristan*. I persist in thinking that the right thing is bound to come of itself sometime. In the meantime Queen Victoria has got it into her head that she wants to hear *Lohengrin* this winter. * * *

And now I am on the point of moving. From October 15th I shall be living at 3 rue d'Aumale. It is a little place and I hope I shall not have either to write or compose there—it can only be useful as a business office. I have practically lost my case; they will not pay me a penny of compensation. * * *

478. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, ZURICH

PARIS, 20th October, 1860.

* * * * They are rehearsing *Tannhäuser* at the Opera with a zeal, earnestness, exactitude and care which is the very pattern—unattainable I have always thought—of what such study should be. I have never seen anything even approaching this punctilious and minute attention to detail at any theatre. My German singer, Niemann, is rubbing his eyes and confessing that he is learning his score for the first time. Besides the uncommon excellence of the organisation of the Opera as a whole, I must particularly praise the extraordinary personal ability of the chief officials and, above all, the inestimable *directeur du chant* who practises the singers at the pianoforte. All the technical side of rehearsal is managed with incomparable accuracy and neatness, the slightest divergences of text reconciled, etc. * * * *

479. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

PARIS, 13th November, 1860.

* * * * I am recovering—very slowly—but I am recovering.—I have scarcely any recollection of the first week of my illness,¹ though memory is gradually coming back to me somewhat. For some days I was almost completely blind. I am uncommonly weak at present, amazingly thin and hollow-eyed. As you know, I am really always in pain; nervous excitement alone can deaden it; and now that I must avoid any excitement you can imagine what is left to me! * * * *

480. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, ZURICH

PARIS, 16th December, 1860.

* * * * Really, I have almost recovered my old elasticity, though unluckily my immediate and impatient exertions tend somewhat to overtax the strength of a convalescent. * * * I have not yet finished the orchestration of the new scene between *Tannhäuser* and *Venus*; the first dance scene is still missing, and, up to now, I have no idea how I shall carry it out. Moreover, there is this absorbing Paris in which I live like a hermit, yet cannot prevent others from taking an interest in me, and to these I cannot be actually offensive. And, after all, it does sometimes happen that one wants a companion!

¹ Typhoid fever. See also No. 480.

Well, a delay has occurred in the rehearsals of *Tannhäuser*, because of my illness of nearly six weeks; yet I still count on the last week in January, particularly if by some miracle I should get my composition done in time. * * *

* * * My authority is unquestioned, and is stronger than ever now, as the Princess Metternich (who becomes more and more devoted to me) and Walewski are especially friendly. * * *

481. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

[PARIS], 23rd December, 1860.

* * * I remain cold and untouched by the things which, almost without exception, set the world in motion. Fame has no power to sway me, gain only in so far as it may keep me from want. *Seriously* to undertake anything for the sake of either would be impossible for me. * * * Renewed contact with musicians, singers and the rest, has wrung many a sigh from me and has provided much strengthening nourishment for the virtue of resignation in me. I see more and more plainly how immeasurably far my artistic culture (among other things) has removed me from this basis, so unalterable in our modern life. I confess that now, when I suddenly cast a glance upon my *Nibelungs*, on *Tristan*, I start up as from a dream and say to myself, "Where have you been? You have been dreaming! Open your eyes and see—*this is Reality!*"

Yes, I do not deny that I really consider that my later works are impossible to perform. But, nevertheless, when I feel the impulse stirring within me to actualise even this impossibility, I know that the only way to achieve my end is to let my mind rove back again into the world of dreams. * * *

If there is anything that spurs me on to the *Tannhäuser* enterprise here, it is really no more than the ineradicable tendency of my nature to be excited by artistic activities. All day long I force myself laboriously to be interested in the affair, but once I am at rehearsal the immediate contact with art takes hold upon me. I squander myself and my energies, and all for an enterprise which, apart from that moment, leaves me indifferent. * * *

O my child, where am I to look for my one and only consolation? Once I found a heart, a soul which understood me in these moments, to which I became dear just because they could understand me, comprehend me, at those times! To this soul, then, I flee, relax all my limbs like one weary to death and let myself sink into the soft ether of another's sympathetic nature! All I have had to go through,



RICHARD WAGNER, 1861

*From H. S. Chamberlain, "Richard Wagner," published by Messrs.
Friedrich Bruckmann, Munich*

the deep emotions, troubles, sufferings of the past, dissolve like thunder-clouds in refreshing showers which bathe my burning temples. Then at length I know refreshment and rest, sweet rest. I am beloved—understood!

This rest—I offer it to you! In the blessed consciousness of what you are to me—my angel of peace, the guardian of my life,—may you, too, find the sublime source which shall water the desert of your existence! Share my rest, receive it wholly to-day just as I enjoy it at this moment, sinking myself wholly in you! This is my wish—my gift to you!

R. W.

482. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, ZURICH

[PARIS, about 20th January, 1861.]

*** Yesterday, after sitting up till about half-past two in the morning, I finished what remained of my new composition for *Tannhäuser*; the same day I found it necessary to make another alteration in the Song Tournament, for which I need a clear head. Every morning and on four evenings in the week—rehearsals, and moreover, the old story, I have to see to any and every accessory myself. At 11 o'clock this morning a rehearsal with horns for the hunting music—impossible to get them anywhere in Paris, but at last achieved by inconceivable personal exertions. This horrible lumbering of a wagon with innumerable wheels and no driver! I have to be everywhere. For much, nay everything, is really new to these people. ***

483. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

[PARIS], *Mardi gras* [12th February, 1861].

*** You ask me about the women of my acquaintance. I have got to know many, but am not on familiar terms with any.

Madame Ollivier is a very talented, even a dazzling, personality.

*** I wonder why it is that we see so little of each other. ***

It is the same with all my acquaintances. The chances of gaining anything by cultivating social relations more vigorously are so remote that I am glad to remain passive and—according to the whim of the moment—put up with whomsoever chance brings to my door. Among others *** there is a Fräulein von Meyensenbug, who is staying here at present as governess to some Russian children. *** When she was brought to see me it was in her favour that formerly, in London days,¹ *** I treated her very badly in a

¹ See *My Life*, pp. 731-3.

fit of ill-temper. The remembrance of this affected me and she * * likes me better now. * * *

In the so-called upper circles of society, there is a lady whom I used to know superficially, but who interests me more now than formerly. She is the Countess Kalergis, a niece of the Russian Chancellor of State, Nesselrode, of whom I think I have already told you. * * * Last summer, when staying for a time in Paris, she sought me out and arranged that I should get Klindworth to come from London to play with her. One day I sang the second act of *Tristan* with Mme. Garcia-Viardot, *tête-à-tête*, save for Berlioz. And we looked into *The Nibelungs* as well. I did this for the first time since I left you. What drew my attention to this lady was the impression she gave me of a strange weariness, a scorn and disgust of the world, but I might not have been interested if I had not at the same time recognised a manifestly profound yearning for music and poetry which, under the circumstances, seemed to me significant. As, moreover, her talent in these directions was great, the lady could not fail to interest me. She was also the first person I came across to startle me—quite spontaneously—by her really noble apprehension of my position. * * *

Frau von Pourtalès, wife of the Prussian ambassador, seems to be not without depth, and in any case has a fine taste.

I have discovered that the wife of the Saxon ambassador, Frau von Seebach, has a great deal in her. I was surprised by a sort of gentle fire, glowing as it were beneath the lava. She cannot understand how anyone could fail to see the tremendous passion in my conceptions and thought it dangerous to take her young daughter to *Tannhäuser*. One becomes acquainted with such curious people! But they are *only* acquaintances! * * * *

* * * Rehearsals are going forward with unheard-of conscientiousness, almost past my understanding, and there is no doubt that the performance will be remarkable. Niemann is altogether sublime. He is a great artist of the rarest quality. The success of the other rôles will be due more to training. Still I hope extreme care will suffice to hide any absurdities. * * * *

484. TO ALBERT NIEMANN, PARIS

PARIS, 21st February, 1861.

Please read the last page first and then go back to the beginning according to inclination and mood, or not at all!

My friend! They tell me that your perpetually increasing discouragement is driving you to ask for fresh sacrifices on my

part. It would be unpardonable in me to go on flattering this weakness!—

During our six months' study of *Tannhäuser* I have had the satisfaction of working so advantageously upon singers, who previously had not an idea of how my music is to be sung, that one is amazed at the improvement which later became apparent in their performances. While everything here improves, and fills me with joy and hope, you seem to pretend to deteriorate and recoil step by step, robbing me of the satisfaction of gaining any kind of influence over you. While Mme. Tedesco, for instance, surprises me by achieving what she said she would never be able to achieve, and while Mlle. Sax, at my insistence, attains a lung-capacity of which she seemed to have no idea before and can sing passages, such as the close of her *adagio* in the second finale, as beautifully as you heard her do at the rehearsal the day before yesterday, I have failed to persuade *you* so much as to adopt a different division of the breathing to unite the two sections of the first verse of *Tannhäuser's* song for the purpose of getting a more beautiful, more profound and more satisfying effect in this passage!

Although I chose you from all Germany, at a time when you were little known even there, distinguished you before France, nay, before all Europe, by summoning you and no other to Paris as the one singer whom I could trust, completely, blindly, I have never succeeded, since your arrival in Paris, in winning the least trust from *you*. You have kept me—I may almost say insultingly—at a distance. You have carefully avoided taking any advice from me. You have been so discourteous as to tell me, very prematurely, that you intend to leave the Parisian production of *Tannhäuser* in the lurch, once for all, at the end of May; that in future you do not intend to have much to do with my operas at all, and thereby you shatter my new-born hope of having found the right singer for my heroic rôles, well knowing the importance I attach to you for my future and that of my works.—

Well, I can only put up with it and make my future plans accordingly.

But for the moment we are concerned with the immediate question of this Parisian production of *Tannhäuser*. In this matter I cannot conceal from you the things that weigh on my heart.—

It is true that you showed from the first that you were not minded to accept any analysis of your interpretation from me, and yet I hoped that your innate artistic susceptibility would bring about an understanding between us on various points of detail. Though you proved yourself very stubborn in this respect, I hoped

I saw that you had taken a hint here and there. I now realise, that after six months of work together, your sole object, ultimately, is to reduce the great performance *I* expected of you to the exact level of your previous performances in this rôle. * * *

The fact that it was possible for you to give only the third act in Germany, is in itself a disclosure of the weak point in your previous performance. Even mediocre singers have succeeded in being comparatively effective in this third act. * * * Now I tell you that I make you a present of the whole of this third act if you will only give me a good finale to the second act. *There* is the dramatic crisis, *there* is the moment at which Tannhäuser must claim and compel the most intense interest. If he fails in this, the whole third act becomes a mere piece of staginess for which I would not give a snap of the fingers. * * *

* * * Think of nothing but this second finale; throw yourself into it body and soul, as if you had not a note more to sing. * * * It is *the* decisive moment *for the whole evening!* Believe *me*, trust me only this *once* and you shall hear no more of me for the rest of your life!! Once you have brought out the "*pitié pour moi*" as I have heard you do it repeatedly, as you *can* do it, in a way to make the hair stand on end and shake the heart, *everything, everything* will be achieved, the immediate effect will be immeasurable, and all that follows will be—child's-play. * * *

Once more—sing the second finale as if it was your last note for the evening, and be assured that only *then* will you sing the third act to my entire satisfaction. In a word, you are, to my mind, much too fresh, too sensuously powerful in the third act, and up till now I have waited in vain for the nuances I demand. In this scene I do not *want* any exhibition of sensual vocal power; everything in your presentation is still far too material. To keep step with you I should have to re-instrument my entire orchestra at your entrance. There is a deliberately calculated ghostly tonelessness at this point, which should rise gradually to an expression of pathetic tenderness, but no higher. You give the whole narrative up to the arrival in Rome with too much physical vigour. That is not the way the story would be told by a man just awakened from madness for a lucid quarter of an hour, a being from whom those who meet him shrink fearfully away, who has scarcely eaten for months and whose life is preserved only by a tiny flame of half-mad longing. In your mouth, the papal excommunication has, indeed, an energy which is crushingly effective, but if the physical exhibition of this energy were to be weakened a little, the right effect would by no means be lost, but rather, when supported by

suitable rhetorical delivery, become exactly what it should be. Now, far be it from me to wish anything *different* here, but I simply wanted to tell you that you should not sacrifice your performance in the second finale to *this* passage. And I want to prove to you that even if Tannhäuser should be somewhat hoarse in Act III. it would be no misfortune, whereas I consider it would be a real misfortune if Tannhäuser were obliged, by physical means, to secure an interest in Act III. which he had missed in the critical Act II.—* * * *

* * * I would suggest to you with complete conviction that you would be mistaken not to attempt the new verse in the Song Contest; it would mean loss of brilliance and of a very necessary dramatic moment. But it is absolutely impossible for me to sacrifice the passage in the second finale because of your momentary discouragement! And surely it would be strange for you, the young and vigorous hero, to go back to Germany and there learn the effectiveness of this passage from old Tichatschek, for he still sings it!

Courage, courage, friend! Don't let yourself fall a victim to a softness which so ill becomes you! Sing the passage at the full rehearsal with *all* your might, and then we shall see its effect on the third act.

This is the last request which I, as author, shall make you. You have made it plain enough to me that for the future I shall be obliged, with *great* sorrow I admit to you, to do without you.

11.30 o'clock.

I had got thus far when your letter arrived.

I see now the stage you have reached. You use language towards me which I really can only understand by putting myself back into the earliest years of my troublous career.

I think I can assure you, however, that you are mistaken when you speak of the failure which you have involved yourself in, and wonder who has been reporting boulevard gossip to you.

I ask myself hesitatingly whether it can be any use now to send you this letter, or whether it will only make matters worse. However, I will not take such abrupt leave of my last hope on the artistic side.

This letter will show you what a very great opinion I have of you, and perception of this must surely preserve you from any superficial misunderstanding of the spirit in which I write to you.

On one point, however, I take back what I have written above—that is to say, I declare my readiness to cut the passage in dispute. * * * *

485. TO HIS SISTER, LOUISA BROCKHAUS, DRESDEN

[PARIS, *end of March*, 1861.]

* * Here is the promised account¹ for Fritz. I have finished it amidst a thousand interruptions. Quite likely the style may not be very fine. * * *

I do not think I have anything essential to add to that article, except perhaps a stronger emphasis upon the weaknesses of the performance which were my sole real grief throughout the affair. After all, I had to leave the conducting to a "musical subaltern"² (as Herwegh describes him in a Zürich report)! My sufferings *before* the performance, which I unfortunately could no longer cancel, were far greater than *after* it. The truth is that I am glad to have been prevented by the Jockey Club from getting my work actually heard. I myself could not have listened to it any more!

It really grieves me that I should have allowed myself to be involved again in such an event after long years of abnegation, and I can only comfort myself with the resolve that nothing of the kind shall occur again.

For the rest, I am not in the least angry with the Parisians. They are frivolous and will repeat any nonsense that is palmed off on them. When the thing is actually presented to them, they are still capable of seeing what is good, and will then warmly stand up for what pleases them.—The only thing that surprises me is the denseness of my exalted patrons in Germany, to whom it has never occurred that it is unworthy that a serious artist like myself should be exposed to all the chances of the life of an adventurer. Who will offer me a safe haven, a suitable studio for my art in my own country?—Do not let us get too puffed up on the score of German sincerity and profundity! In the meantime I do not feel that I shall give up Paris yet. * * * *

486. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BERLIN

PARIS, *4th April*, 1861.

I have been looking forward to your letter with great uneasiness, dear Hans! I have had very disturbing reports of the health of your good wife. * * * Cosima's temperament is the worst enemy of her health. She is of very distinguished antecedents and is therefore difficult to look after! I am glad to hear of the proposed cure in the Tyrol. * * * Give Cosima my warmest greetings, and tell her how

¹ "Account of the Performance of *Tannhäuser* in Paris," published in the *Leipziger Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 7 April, 1861 (*Gesammelte Werke*, vol. vii.).

² Dietsch,

fond I am of her and how very glad she would make me if I were to hear that she was really good and sensible—which she seems to find difficult at times!—

As to my latest adventure, I should have been more intimately affected by it if I had been personally more deeply involved in the performance of my work [*Tannhäuser*]. But I was many miles away, and what went on on the stage and in the orchestra seemed actually to be no concern of mine. * * * *

Mme. Kalergis, to whom I at once gave full power to arrange a St. Petersburg engagement for me, has demonstrated the absurdity of my idea and suggests Vienna. In order to discover just what I can *not* count on for the future, I asked Pourtalès to lay a *Tiergarten*¹ plan before Mme. Frommann's Queen. He did so willingly, and is sorry to announce that there is nothing to be done in that direction. You can imagine, then, how very much pleased I was with your Karlsruhe news. It really is the first good chance that has befallen me. And it comes through you and therefore by a road that leaves no possibility of misunderstanding. That is so important. Your General-Music-Director scheme is altogether magnificent, and the fact that for it you have thrown away your chance of a kapellmeistership outdoes Orestes and Pylades. What am I to say to such friendship and such ingenuity!—* * * *

487. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

PARIS, 6th April, 1861.

* * * * Really, I am weary of being nothing but an everlasting trouble to my friends. This sense of bitterness is all that remains to me of the hazardous Paris adventure. The mischance² itself has left me at bottom fairly indifferent.

I weary my friends in the most unjustifiable fashion, and heap burdens on my own shoulders which I really cannot bear any longer.—The good Bülow, who has felt my misfortune most intensely, attempts to secure a consoling prospect for me on German soil. I—have little confidence in it, and incline to believe that I shall have to go on gradually wearing myself away in endeavours to find rest, till I find rest eternal. Yet there are duties which still support me; cares keep me alive. * * * *

¹ The Berlin Zoo, a place of general recreation where concerts, etc., were held. (TRANS.)

² The opposition of the Jockey Club to *Tannhäuser* and the consequent withdrawal of the opera after the third performance.

488. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BERLIN

PARIS, 3rd May, 1861.

**** I have been in Karlsruhe for a couple of days. The lovely weather showed me the pretty little place in a most appealing light. With my Parisian alp piled upon my heart, I looked longingly at the possibility of being able to settle down snugly there. The Grand Ducal pair received me twice, and on each occasion we held spirited conversation for about an hour and a half. The impression made on me by this reception was very satisfactory, and in particular the absence of any sort of affectation made me feel at home.— But, most reassuring of all, was that I came easily to an understanding with Devrient. I was in a good mood and knew how to soften the leatheriness of his nature. Even now I am unable to withhold my regard from this curious man, and the realisation that I could quickly and completely cast a spell over him was a cause of real joy to me. Accordingly, there was something more than adroitness in my dealings with him, as I handled him gently and attempted to spare him any humiliation. He probably believed that behind his back I would settle the affairs of *Tristan* with the Grand Duke, but, instead, I could tell him that at my first interview with the Duke I had only expressed my wish in general terms and said I felt I ought to formulate nothing more definite until I had come to a detailed agreement with Devrient. Naturally he seemed very pleased by this, and we discussed and settled everything which I was to lay before the Grand Duke, as agreed between Devrient and myself, at a second interview. The Duke was very glad to learn that the opera was to be performed as soon as next September. ***

*** My main difficulty now is to choose my singers, to induce and make it possible for them to undertake a two months' engagement of this kind. Consequently I am on the point of going to Vienna to hear Ander and Dustmann preliminarily. Of course, I should have gone long ago, but unfortunately I was unable to straighten out my finances sufficiently to embark on the journey. ****

Things happen most oddly between myself and Liszt! Sure enough he is to come here just after I leave! *** I should really like to know how I could ever have been anything to Liszt! He has other and more abstruse standards of doing and leaving undone than I, poor plebeian, can appreciate.—

I am on pins and needles to scrape a little money together and be able to get away. The opera at Vienna is coming to an end and if I do not arrive there within the next week I have no prospect of hearing anything good.—***

489. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

VIENNA, 11th May, 1861.

I have just attended a rehearsal of *Lohengrin*! The incredibly moving effect upon me of this first hearing I cannot lock away among my loveliest and clearest of experiences, artistic *and* human, without sharing it at once with you. I waited for this through twelve years of my life—and what years!! You were right to desire this joy for me so often! But it could never have been offered me so fully anywhere but here! Ah! if only *you* were to be present to-morrow!! * * * *

490. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

VIENNA, 13th May, 1861.

Lohengrin will not be performed until Wednesday, Frau Ortund having met with a slight accident. I really am glad of this delay, for the excitement of the performance would have followed too close upon the state of emotion into which the rehearsal plunged me. * * * I sat there quite still all the time, while one tear after another ran down my cheek. The dear people came quietly and embraced me. At the close, the orchestra and chorus broke into loud cheers. You may imagine how I thanked them! But no doubt I delighted good Kapellmeister Esser most of all, for the poor fellow had been in intense anxiety beforehand as to whether I should be satisfied or want a number of things altered. So he stood there without a word, as dumb as a post, while I told him that when one got as a gift from heaven such a performance as this, one lost all idea of criticising in any way. * * * Opera here is heavenly—a mass of glorious voices, each more lovely than the other—choir—orchestra overpoweringly beautiful! Ander—the tenor—utterly perfect; his voice not merely adequate but, where necessary, full of brilliant force, a thoroughly conscious artist, excellent in delivery and action, full of his subject, all life and fire. Then Mme. Dustmann, with a heavenly, soulful voice, capable of anything, lightly and softly adaptable in every way, has admirable dramatic expression. She brings out every nuance so naturally and clearly, so movingly and truly, that I had nothing whatever to tell her. With these two—no doubt of *Tristan and Isolde*!—

* * *—To-day—just this minute—I have been presented to Count Lanckoronski, the *Court Intendant* of the Imperial Theatre. I had to say the most flattering things to him (with a good conscience), as he is said to take an interest in every little detail of the theatre, while *I* for my part had the advantage with him of having been

enthusiastically received here as a composer. So I think we parted quite excellent friends. He has offered me his theatre for every one of my operas, and I am told he does not jest, but means what he says literally and keeps his word.—Anyhow, I now cut a comic figure in my own eyes with my laborious model performance at Karlsruhe, for which I have first to collect all my material, and I believe I ought to lay hold here, where I have *everything, everything* needed all ready to my hand, with an enthusiastic and enormous public at my back into the bargain.—* * *

* * * I am sorry to say I am over-besieged here, and regularly feel rather overdone. Tausig and Cornelius are here, too! That confounded youngster, again, amuses me very much.—* * *

491. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

PARIS, 27th May, 1861.

* * * * Well, I had really pleasant relations with the Grand Duke in Karlsruhe. His joy at my final choice to settle there rather than anywhere else in Germany was very great. He will be zealous to do all he can to help me ¹ find a suitable dwelling.

Liszt is still here and I am to have a long visit from him this evening. * * *—For the rest, my child, I look forward to a difficult and unpleasant period. If only I can have everything happily settled by the beginning of July when I recross the Rhine! Wish me this! In the meantime little Tausig is a help to me. He actually followed me to Vienna and before that coaxed me into a laughing mood from time to time in Karlsruhe. I regard him as in part a gift from you. * * * *

492. TO PETER CORNELIUS, VIENNA ²

PARIS, 14th June, 1861.

* * I am sending you to-day a pianoforte arrangement from *Tristan*, in which I have marked the alterations necessary for Ander. As Esser, and I presume also Ander, are not at present in Vienna, I believe the best thing I can do is to leave the affair in your hands. * * * In the meantime, however, perhaps it would be as well to see to the copying at once, as there are, as you will see, a few passages to be altered, notably in the orchestral part. I would like to ask you to undertake the transposition towards the end of Act II. yourself, as I am afraid that a copyist would not do it properly. * * * * Herr and Frau Dustmann are still in Vienna, I suppose?

¹ The whole scheme fell through.

² *An seine Künstler*, p. 493.

*** If Isolde be studying her part already, she is not on any account to be despondent; I have boundless confidence in her!—
 *** I had not much opportunity to enjoy the society of Liszt, as he was the property of an exceedingly wide circle. He left here last Saturday with Tausig. I saw more of Tausig, but on the whole things were not very happy, chiefly on account of my uncertain situation and—of Paris. Tausig is gadding about Leipzig and Weimar now. The good-hearted little fellow is trying to be of use to me.—***

I am conscientiously bearing your opera subject ¹ in mind, but I utterly lack the right mood for putting down properly on paper my scheme of alteration for you. Be sure, though, that I shall do it, and soon. I know myself! But one cannot do anything without the right mood!

The pleasant frame of mind induced by Vienna is unfortunately quite blighted. When I look forward now to my difficult projects there, I feel more fear than joy, and at the same time the thought of being able at last to hear this music is the one thing that fills me with the wish to live!

Give my kindest regards to my new friends in Vienna, particularly Herr Dr. Standhartner, to whom I took a great liking. ***

493. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

PARIS, 15th June, 1861.

**** My life is a succession of wan and spiritless days. Nothing in the world gives me any joy, neither work of any sort, nor anything else. I can scarcely bring myself to write the most necessary letters! Perhaps I can call my condition a trial of patience! Complete uncertainty—that is all that I can express!—

I go out very little now—my distaste for everything is too great. I simply try to kill time and read Goethe at random. ***

Liszt and Tausig left a week ago. I was glad to see the last of them—that is my present frame of mind! I can't get the thing I want, and nothing is any help to me. Liszt's way of life seems strange to me, to be sure. I met him for the first time twenty years ago in Paris, when in my then very precarious circumstances. I had already conceived a profound disgust for the world in which *he* fluttered about before my eyes, all brilliance and glitter. And now, when to my cost Fate has brought me again into contact

¹ Peter Cornelius to Rosa von Milde, 23 May, 1861 (Cornelius, *Literarische Werke*, vol. i., Leipzig, 1904): "He means to write me a letter about my *Cid* with proposals for improvements in the second and third acts."

with that world, when the experiences of my youth are repeated, and when nothing—no illusion, no show—has power any longer to persuade me to go an inch to meet that world, there is Liszt again, basking in its brilliance before my very eyes! * * * ¹ No one knows better than he what kind of prize is to be attained there. Accordingly, I shall do him truer justice if I suppose that the *true* prize is still denied even to him, though he likes from time to time to intoxicate himself with shows. * * * ¹ I could not follow him to any of his haunts, so I saw little of him. However, I have promised to visit him in Weimar for a couple of weeks. He means to compose some big symphonic works there. * * * *

My sole interest is the *Tristan* project. Do consider whether you can do anything to persuade Papa to spend the autumn and a part of the winter in Vienna this year. * * * You would then have a quiet opportunity of hearing all that I have to offer: *Tristan*, *Lohengrin*, *The Flying Dutchman*, *Tannhäuser*. It would really make a homely winter of it for you. * * *

494. TO THE SAME

PARIS, 12th July, 1861.

MY CHILD!

I am writing to you from the hotel of the Prussian Embassy, where I have found refuge with Count Pourtalès for the few weeks I have still to spend in Paris. Before my eyes is a garden with beautiful high trees and a pool with two black swans, beyond the garden the Seine, and beyond the Seine the grounds of the Tuileries, so I can breathe a little and at least am no longer in ordinary Paris.

My furniture is once again packed and warehoused at the same depot as before. * * * I want my wife to settle again in Dresden and have it all with her there. For my own part, I have given up all idea of settling down anywhere. This is the outcome of a last, hard, exceedingly wretched experience! It is not my destiny to cultivate my music in cosy domesticity. * * * *

I am *not* going to Karlsruhe!! * * * *

495. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, STAYING AT BAD SODEN

PARIS, 16th July, 1861.

* * * * It is nearly a week since you left here and we were once more obliged to give up a settled home. I have been in a very depressed mood because of the repeated recurrence of this restless

¹ Passages here have been suppressed by the first editor. The original letters have been destroyed.

fate of ours. I could not believe that life would not have one good thing to offer before my departure from Paris. * * *

I really cannot sufficiently praise the Pourtalès family. In everything I am looked upon as one of the family and treated with much kindly consideration. * * * It all tends to lessen the bitterness of my farewell to Paris.—

And now I feel that only one thing can quite distract my mind from all these unhappy recent experiences—and that is earnest preoccupation with my art! * * *

From Vienna I am advised to delay no longer but to go there as soon as possible in person—they are in great need of my stimulating presence even to start the rehearsals [of *Tristan*]. * * * *

496. TO MALWIDA VON MEYSENBUG, PARIS

PARIS, 25th July, 1861.

The worst is over. I will not waste time on a description of my last month; that kind of thing is best forgotten. It was no use in the end—I had to apply seriously to my diplomatic friends here. With toil and trouble—but with much goodwill * * absolute necessities were provided, and it is a comfort to me that my wife really noticed little of my distress. After we had spent four more ghastly days in the house, she set off happily about a fortnight ago with the parrot. * * *

The Flying Dutchman is getting on, but only very gradually, in French. Finished or not, I am determined to leave on Monday evening. I shall spend a day taking leave of my wife at Soden. I would gladly get out of Liszt's invitation,¹ but I hear it would make him perfectly miserable if I were not to come. Then on to Vienna, where I shall probably stay somewhat longer. When I cast an eye on my *Tristan* score, I can hardly think it possible as yet!

* * * Two precious years have been simply thrown away and I feel extraordinarily weary. What I have lost for art I have won, perhaps, for life, in one last deeply-graven lesson—not to try to force things to fit together which will *not* fit. * * *

497. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

VIENNA, 19th August, 1861.

* * * * Of course, there was no question of rest and enjoyment in Weimar.² People crowded from far and near to see me again—or for the first time. I really had to tell my life-history to a fresh

¹ See No. 493.

² The Musical Festival of the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Musikverein* (Pan-German Musical Society) took place here in the first week in August.

person every half-hour. Despair at last gave rise to my old mad mood, and everyone was delighted with my jocularities. Only I dared not be serious, because I can never be so now without almost dissolving in emotion. * * *

I feel more and more as if I had come near the end of my life's journey; its *goal* has long been out of the question. * * * I care for nothing and have faith in nothing! Only one thing touches my heart—when others weep with me!—Well, dear Hans has done that, and Liszt also! And my kind old friend, Mme. Frommann, came and helped me! Another thing that helped me to endure, was that people often praised my courage and spoke to me of wonderful glories to come. Accordingly, I parted from Weimar in friendly fashion, and in particular took with me a very charming remembrance of Liszt, who is also leaving Weimar (where he can make nothing thrive), and is going out to meet a future uncertain for the moment. His *Faust* gave me really great delight, and the second part (Gretchen) made an unforgettably deep impression on me. I was very grieved that all this could only be performed in the most mediocre fashion. Everything had to be settled at a *single* rehearsal and Hans, who conducted, did wonders to make the performance endurable.

And so, ultimately, all the sacrifices of the fortunate Liszt have come to this—that he could not get from this miserable world the ordinary means for a good performance of his own work! How this realisation confirmed me in my abnegation! * * * I saw exactly how it was with these princes¹ from whom I have felt compelled to expect something, more or less, for a considerable time. I know now that even the best of them, with the best will in the world, cannot possibly do anything for me. * * *

Well, I have been in Vienna for some days. A kindly enthusiast, Dr. Standhartner, has taken me into his house for a few weeks while his family is away. After that I must see what I can do next. Perhaps I shall find someone else to take me in! Unfortunately, my tenor, Ander, has something wrong with his voice and the study of *Tristan* is thereby delayed. * * * The people here are good to me, but not one of them really knows the danger I bring them into with my *Tristan*, and perhaps it will become impracticable when once they discover this. Isolde alone [Frau Dustmann] (I went through her part with her a little recently) guesses the state of things. How horrified they will all be if I tell them frankly some day that they may have to share my ruin!

Up till now I can bear witness that I have never intentionally

¹ The Grand Duke of Weimar was unable to offer him protection.

betrayed anyone. When the management of the theatre asked about terms, I could not possibly ask for money, but simply stipulated that for four weeks before the proposed first performance my singers and the orchestra should be well provided. This gives me the necessary composure. * * * *

498. TO THE SAME

VIENNA, 13th September, 1861.

* * * Not long ago I was carried off to the country-seat of a Hungarian family, that of Count Nakó, who prides himself on having been the first and most ardent devotee of my music in Vienna. A young and amiable man, Prince Rudolph Liechtenstein, who, on the way, called for his equally estimable and very gentle wife, escorted me to Schwarzenau, at the foot of a high mountain range. It is a wonderful situation. The plains, if they were filled with water, might easily remind one of a Swiss lake. The castle was furnished in quite unusual taste and betrayed a most curious and fanciful mind in choice, arrangement and invention. The countess, a lady nearing the end of her thirtieth year, has startlingly intelligent great black eyes, and is famous for her very original natural gift for music. She keeps a troop of gipsies as her private band of musicians, accompanies them on the pianoforte and improvises the most marvellous stuff with them for hours on end. I feared that I should find affectation in her emotionalism, but her mien soon reassured me. * * * The gipsy band were for the moment in Hungary, so the countess tried to give us an idea of the music she makes with them on the pianoforte alone. It was very original and arresting. Soon she began to bring in motifs from *Lohengrin*, and so at last I, too, had to sit down to the instrument. I was delighted with the lovely silence with which it was all received. Only the count, a slim handsome Hungarian of the authentic breed, felt obliged to tell me numerous stories of the impression created by my works. I suffered it all very patiently because he related the gist of remarks heard about me with incredible good-nature. In young Liechtenstein I recognised a touching melancholy¹ * * * *

499. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BERLIN

VIENNA, 19th September, 1861.

* * * * I should have been very glad to hear from you and Cosima. I much enjoyed seeing *her* at Reichenhall.² If only the

¹ But compare *My Life*, pp. 794, 795.

² She had been taking a cure there since May. Wagner went to see her there, accompanied by Ollivier. Cf. *My Life*, pp. 791, 792.

naughty child would look after herself properly! I hear that she is visiting her father again—if only she doesn't let herself be persuaded there into small but, to her, very harmful excesses! She's a wild child; that I say and that I stand by! But she has nobility. You must make use of that to persuade her to give up even little injurious habits. Pride must make her grow even-tempered and calm. I was very much reassured by her appearance. No doubt all will be well with her!—* * * *

I often see Tausig and Cornelius. Mme. Dustmann is equal to Isolde already and sings the part ravishly. But Ander is nowhere near the Tristan as yet.—

500. TO THE SAME

VIENNA, 24th September, 1861.

* * * * In Weimar I reckoned up my position and thought myself secure, and yet my situation was unhappily so thoroughly Wagnerian that it was liable to be totally reversed by two small factors: (1) Kolatschek's hospitality¹—consequently impossible to live in Vienna almost without expense—consequently my financial position entirely altered; (2) instead of *Tristan* being performed at the beginning of October (with all the implications)—extremely doubtful whether it will come on at all this winter, though the chance that it may yet be brought out in December chains me here for the present. Consequently—the same old misery in full measure!!—* * * *

Here am I, then, twenty-five years married, recognised, loved, admired; back I come to my German Fatherland, and all my little future hangs—or rather dangles—on the lax vocal chords of a tired tenor who will neither let me live nor die. I drag around from inn to inn and fancy myself an opera composer!—

Well, give Cosima greetings, too. * * * The two sisters were so charming, unusual, brilliant and stimulating that I swallowed Ollivier down gallantly! * * *

501. TO B. SCHOTT AND SONS, MAINZ

VIENNA, 17th October, 1861.

* * * * Your purchase and publication of *The Rhinegold* proves to me that quick returns are not your object in all your ventures. The interests which you have taken into consideration in this instance

¹ Cf. *My Life*, p. 793.

are highly flattering to me and do you the greatest honour. The question now is, whether you are inclined to shoulder with me the full consequences of this enterprise and to venture a capital outlay on a great connected work which, I am bold to assert, will redound to the honour of the German spirit. * * *

* * *—As you know, three big works besides *The Rhinegold* are projected for the completion of my *Nibelung* cycle. The first, *The Valkyrie*, is quite complete, and I have already in my hands a pianoforte arrangement, which, it is true, would need considerable simplification for purposes of publication. Of the second, *Young Siegfried*, two acts are complete. The whole might easily be completed with the third (*Siegfried's Death*) in the course of a couple of years. At present my efforts in Germany are directed to provide the means of staging this work for the first time. I hope great things of the extraordinary wealth of musical resources in Vienna, especially if I achieve the necessary standing here, a thing that needs patience and suitable leisure on my part. I hope,¹ then, to open the new Royal Opera House, which is about to be built in two years' time, with *The Rhinegold* and, if possible, to follow this up immediately with *The Valkyrie*.

Herewith I lay before you a scheme, to the fulfilment of which I am prepared to dedicate all my energies. Will you help me with it * * ? Should you feel inclined to publish this great work, *The Valkyrie* (of quite special interest, I venture to assert), at once, together with a pianoforte arrangement, it would suit me very well, for the public would get to know it and a movement on the part of the educated public would give me much-needed assistance towards my goal. In any case, I draw your attention to this work as the object which would in time indemnify you, should you be ready now to do as I wish and place 3000 francs at my disposal forthwith. Perhaps we could effect the sale of this and the other works simultaneously, on the basis that you should pay me 3000 francs *down* on each work delivered ready for press, and another 7000 francs on the day of the fresh stage performance of each. But I do not wish to importune you. I understand how hard it must be for you, however great may be your confidence in my achievements, to overcome your prejudice against what for the present may seem chimerical in my projects; the more so, indeed, as you cannot yet have gained reassurance even from *The Rhinegold* (already published), the performance of which must necessarily remain a problem until I have collected the data to enable me to solve it.² * * * *

¹ Nothing came of this.

² The publishers agreed. See No. 503.

502. TO KARL KLINDWORTH, LONDON

VIENNA, 22nd October, 1861.

*** Have the pianoforte arrangement of *The Valkyrie* ready ** ; it is possible that we shall soon have it printed. Only—I beg, I implore you—make it easier, and especially easier than *The Rhinegold*. People are afraid of the latter and I cannot go any further until I have an easier pianoforte arrangement to offer Schott.—***

503. TO B. SCHOTT AND SONS, MAINZ

VIENNA, 30th October, 1861.

** I am greatly obliged to you. If I have let a few days pass before assuring you of my sincere and cordial acknowledgments, it is because your friendly letter further elucidated my present difficult position as regards public opinion on my recent works, and consequently I had many things to consider very carefully before I could give you an answer.

In the first place, I am glad to be able to give you a good account of the prospective performance of *Tristan and Isolde*. Two years ago at Karlsruhe, though the tenor, Schnorr, was quite equal to his rôle, the then *prima donna* [Garrigues] was quite unequal to hers, so that my opera *Tristan* had to be shelved. This time, in Vienna, I have been embarrassed by the tenor Ander's voice trouble, which began suddenly last summer and has become chronic, whereas Mme. Dustmann has completely conquered her part and promises to give a most admirable performance. This mishap involves no fault of mine and has no significance except that my adversaries use the occasion to assert anew that my operas are impossible of performance **. Although rehearsals have been and are held up, I summoned the orchestra to one the other day and—without preparation—had several fragments of my work performed with the help of the two women singers¹ who already know their rôles by heart. I was delighted by the clearness of the performance at short notice and also by the clamorous enthusiasm with which it was received by performers and audience alike. It was admitted on all hands that once more there had been a great deal of foolish talk about my work.—It is now settled that we are to begin regular rehearsals of the opera at the new year and hold the first performance in February. As I cannot possibly count on Ander this winter, the newly engaged tenor, Morini, is cast for the part of Tristan. As he is an excellent musician he will fill the rôle easily.² In the

¹ Brangane was sung by Marie Destinn, called Löwe-Destinn after her marriage.

² His incapacity was soon apparent.

meantime I think of going to Paris for two months. What I particularly wish to tell you now, however, is the following:

My creative work has long been interrupted. Oppressed by vexatious and long delays attending my attempts to get my works performed, I long to undertake some piece of artistic work which would occupy me pleasantly and distract my mind. At this time and to this end I do not feel that I can return to my great *Nibelung* cycle, preferring to postpone that to a period of public recognition.

My wish to apply myself to some easier, less exhausting and speedier work is reinforced by consideration of the difficulties with which I have to contend in getting my serious works performed, and I believe it is a happy thought, according with my mood and circumstances, to put in hand at once the execution of an earlier idea for a popular operatic comedy. The opera is called *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*, and the chief hero is the jovial poet Hans Sachs. The subject is extraordinarily full of kindly humour, and I flatter myself that this plan, which is all my own, is something striking and original. The style in poetry and music shall be thoroughly light and popular, and this time I shall need neither a so-called first-class tenor nor a great tragic soprano; a rapid circulation through all theatres may be anticipated.

I must also confess that this project, which accords with my present frame of mind and need for cheerful light employment, has also suddenly become attractive to me in view of my relations with you **. I engage to deliver this work—“*The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*, a great comic opera in three acts”—complete and ready for performance next winter. As soon as I have the poem finished, I promise to submit it to you at once, and from its character you will be able to decide whether you wish to undertake the publication of the opera itself. For the present, I retain the sum of 3000 francs (the receipt of which I herewith acknowledge), so kindly advanced by you, as a provisional payment in advance on the honorarium. * * * *

I conclude by begging you most earnestly to maintain for a time absolute silence upon the scheme I have described. Premature discussion has already done me so much harm! * * *

504. TO FRANZ SCHOTT, MAINZ

VIENNA, 20th November, 1861.

* * Yesterday I dispatched to you the finished sketch for a great comic opera. You will see the kind of thing it is and will no doubt agree that I am right in forecasting it as one of my most

original and popular works. I had been saving up this cheerful piece of work for a long time. I believed I should have to wait till I was older, because I did not think myself capable of attaining the right mood for the work in my present harried existence. However, the hardships of this present stage of my human and artistic careers have suddenly recalled this darling project, and working it out is the only thing which can help me to recover from the strain of the endless difficulties of my position. As you are to give me your unreserved support, I will explain the position to you with the utmost frankness.

Having been for two years almost entirely without any pecuniary reward or equivalent for the extraordinary sacrifices which my recent difficult time in Paris exacted from me, I was obliged, in looking forward to a first performance of *Tristan and Isolde* in the course of October, to take into particular account the expected honorarium of 5000 francs. This alone, however, was insufficient aid in view of the burdensome commitments incurred in the period of which I have spoken, and I had to look to the sale of the score this winter to a number of first-class theatres, consequent upon a success in Vienna, to meet my needs in some slight degree. Well, all this has come to nothing. I can no longer count on Ander. Morini has not proved the singer I need for my opera. We are now trying to settle for the succeeding winter with Tichatschek, who is delighted with *Tristan*, and accordingly I see a whole year before me in which I can do nothing towards getting my recent works performed. The management here offered me a payment on account of my honorarium. I believe I acted wisely in refusing it (your welcome advance enabled me to do so), as I was and am thereby in a position vigorously to refute a calumny which has been spread abroad, accusing me of taking forfeit money from the management in respect of *Tristan*. **

When I saw before me the prospect of a year wasted in every respect, I asked myself what I should do next. ***

Then suddenly my wonderful *Mastersingers* cropped up, and all in a moment I felt once more master of my fate. *** Although I have in view a rapid circulation through all the theatres, I do not, of course, in the least intend to offer unworthy work. The subject permits me to write clear, transparent yet pithy music in the gayest colours. A glance at the sketch will show you that my own characteristic note, even the tenderly sentimental, will be struck here round and full. In short, I think I can count, particularly at the moment, on having struck the most characteristic chord of German life, in such a way, moreover, that its originality will appeal to

foreigners as well. For instance, I remember hearing the director of the Grand Opera at Paris [Royer], as he looked with me through the extremely quaint German costumes of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, sigh and say, "Ah, if only you could give us an opera in this costume! Unfortunately I can never make use of it!" (This by the way!)

With regard to the working out of my scheme, let me tell you the following: Before this month is over I shall retire completely from the world for a year and shall very likely accept Prince Metternich's offer ¹ of a small apartment overlooking the garden in his quiet Embassy hotel in Paris. By October 1st, 1862, the opera must be sent to all the German theatres and, I hope, be performed ² at all before December. There is a great demand for a new opera of my composition—only the difficulties—real or imaginary—of my recent completed works scare people away.

I should like to conclude a formal contract with you, putting myself unreservedly in your hands. In it I would undertake to deliver the finished poem on January 1st, 1862, the first act of the score on the last day of March, the second on the last day of June, the third on the last day of September. * * *

I should like Herr Marpurg ³ of Mainz to be commissioned to do the pianoforte arrangements. He would work on each instalment of the full score as it was delivered, so that the pianoforte arrangement could be published simultaneously with the full score.

The prospect of being exclusively occupied in this way on a single continuous task, which will radically distract and cheer me, is the only thing that can make the next year of my life seem not only bearable but actually delightful, otherwise I should languish wretchedly.

This, however, is possible only if *you* have full confidence in me and share *my* confidence in my own powers. On these conditions only can the undertaking commend itself to you, and on my part, I can only proceed if I can feel that for the moment I am relieved of *all* material cares and restrictions, my needs fully supplied for my year of work, and my livelihood secured at least for the period immediately following its completion. * * * *

* * * Let me tell you that I shall visit you in Mainz within the week. It is to be hoped we shall arrange all necessary matters then by word of mouth. * * *

For the rest, for me to gain time now is to gain everything. In

¹ This fell through.

² The first performance did not take place till 1868!

³ This was dispensed with; Tausig arranged the pianoforte version.

strict confidence I may tell you that, as soon as there is no special need for me to press things, and particularly when I am able to leave the financial interest almost entirely out of the game, I have a very secure prospect of receiving certain most important commissions from the Prussian Court, which will serve as the foundation for the production of my *Nibelung* dramas there. It almost rests with myself now, whether I receive an invitation¹ to perform *The Rhinegold* in Berlin next winter. Here in Vienna next winter—in addition to *Tristan* (Tichatschek), Beck will make an excellent Hans Sachs.

I am considering holding the first performance of *The Mastersingers* in Munich¹ about the middle of November. My capacity to make the best of my artistic plans with independent authority rests * * on avoidance of pressure in regard to pecuniary interests where I have to co-operate in person. You cannot believe how much you have helped me by making this possible for me just recently here * *. On the other hand, however, I have no means, no salary, am thrown back on my work, have made the greatest sacrifices in recent years, and at this very moment should be unable to stir from the spot if—the “*Mastersingers*” and friend Schott did not help me!—* * *

505. TO FRAU BETTY SCHOTT, MAINZ

PARIS, 10th December, 1861.

* * Accept my most cordial thanks for the exceedingly kind reception accorded me in your house! Bad as the weather was outside, my two days in Mainz are all clear sunshine in my remembrance, and the Rhine now plays a promising part in my plans for the future! * * * *

May I ask you to assure your esteemed husband once again of how sincerely and profoundly I feel my indebtedness to him. His wide outlook and noble mind have given him a real and significant place among the beneficent and helpful influences on my artistic creativeness. * * * *

506. TO LUDWIG SCHNORR, DRESDEN

PARIS, 10th December, 1861.

* * * What you say about the third act of *Tristan* frees you from me, while on the other hand the pain it has cost you to say it, shows me that we must yet do something together. Do not blame your physical powers if you are afraid of being unequal to

¹ Nothing came of these.

the exertions of this third act. Let the very nature of a theatrical performance convince you of the true view, namely, that where the profoundest subtleties must be illustrated by immediate action, there reigns a different logic than that which governs a purely poetic conception. It is thinkable and possible that this third act of *Tristan* may some day be given in its entirety; but this is impracticable for a first performance. * * * Even if the singer were able to achieve it perfectly forthwith, such prolixity would be more than hazardous at a first performance before the theatrical public. * * *

Therefore, do not let your noble zeal for the task grow cool. Sooner or later you will sing *Tristan*,¹ and then the cuts I have found necessary—on many considerations—will make the part as practicable and easy as you could wish.

507. TO PETER CORNELIUS, VIENNA

PARIS, 11th December, 1861.

* * I have little news to tell and only wished to ask you to let it be unceremonious, "thee and thou," between us for the future. That is self-explanatory and greatly eases the style of letter-writing. Besides, it saves me further lengthy assurances, and that is something gained! For up till now I have managed to get no farther than letter-writing. It is shocking! Talk—or letter-writing—that threatens to become my ultimate vocation for life, it seems.

I am still not taken as present here. I have only shown myself to three friends. One of them, however, assures me to-day that all Paris knows where I am. After all, I am indifferent. I shall do as the ostrich does and hide my head in the sand.² * * * *

508. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BERLIN

PARIS, 17th December, 1861.

* * * * A glance at our theatre has shown me again plainly what is necessary if my art is to take root and not pass away like an ephemera, totally misunderstood. I need a theatre such as I alone can establish. It is not possible for my work to root in a theatre where our operatic nonsense—even the classical included—is given, and where everything, presentation, interpretation and aim, radically and directly contravene what I demand for my work. Place the Court theatres in Vienna or Berlin at my disposal, make me master of what I need, and *still* I cannot get it right—and should frantic exertions succeed in producing the right thing once, the whole scheme

¹ Schnorr actually became the first *Tristan*, but not till 1865.

² Cf. *My Life*, pp. 806, 807.

would collapse like a house of cards the next day, if *The Prophet*, or even *The Magic Flute* or *Fidelio* itself were given. I cannot tolerate the neighbourhood of "Opera" where my "Music-Drama" is to be planted. Accordingly, I see more clearly than ever that I need a theatre of my own which, from the first I can conduct on different lines. I can only have this in one of three cities: Paris, Vienna, Berlin; for only in a great city is there sufficient public for what must at first be regarded as a novelty. As it is too late for me to turn Frenchman, the two German capitals only are open to me. Although Vienna is very musical, I still consider Berlin—especially as you have described it to me recently—more important and more useful. * * * *

509. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

PARIS, 21st December, 1861.

* * * * I often have to laugh aloud when I raise my eyes from my work and see through my window the Tuileries and Louvre. You must know that my real self now is roaming the streets of Nuremberg and accordingly is dealing with a pretty angular and downright race of people. I have been forced to seek that sort of society.¹

The return journey from Venice² to Vienna was very long. * * * * It rings in my head now like an overture to *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*. Back again in my Viennese hotel I worked out my scheme with remarkable speed. I was well pleased to notice in doing this how clear my memory had remained, and how ready and fertile my imagination was in invention! It was a real salvation—just, indeed, as approaching madness can sometimes save life! Well, then, I locked things up right and left, shot the bolt on *Tristan* for a year, politely refused various invitations to triumph in various towns of my glorious German Fatherland and—arrived where I now am to "forget that I am alive!" * * * *

You, too, must leave me my Nuremberg *Mastersingers* for the present! They will turn out quite well and soon—probably at the beginning of next winter—run through³ the German theatres, where I shall not much trouble my head about them.

The performance of *Tristan* is still my main object. Once that is successful I shall have little more to do in this world, and shall

¹ That is, in order to write *The Mastersingers*.

² He had gone there on 7 November to visit the Wesendoncks and returned to Vienna on the 13th.

³ See No. 504, note 2.

willingly lie down to sleep with Master Cervantes. For my writing of *Tristan* I have to thank you, and I do so from the depths of my soul to all eternity! * * *

510. TO THE SAME

[PARIS, *end of December*, 1861.]

* * * * One thing I never relinquished, and, indeed, I thought I had earned it dearly enough—the hope of finding my “Asyl” again, of being able to dwell near you. An hour of seeing you again in Venice¹ was enough to destroy this last dear delusion!

I was soon forced to see that you are unable, when I am near you, to maintain that freedom which you need and on which your steadfastness depends. My absence alone gives you power freely to follow your own will. It is only when you have nothing to buy that you have no price to pay.

I cannot bear to see you cramped, oppressed, enslaved, as the price of my nearness. For I cannot requite your sacrifices, since my presence can promise nothing further, and the thought of the miserably little I can be to you in such conditions, bought at the price of freedom, of human dignity, makes me feel this very nearness a torture.

What is the use of disguising the truth? I see that you feel it and know it yourself—would you not be the very first to do so? You knew it long ago, sooner than I, who long secretly remained an incurable optimist.

It was this, and this alone, that lay on my soul like lead in Venice. It was not the state of my affairs, my other misfortunes—all these are and have been in themselves indifferent to me since I knew you. * * * *

I shall often send you some of my work. How you will open your eyes over my *Mastersingers*! Fortify your heart against Sachs—you will fall in love with him! It is a really wonderful work. The old sketch had little or nothing to offer. Yes, one must oneself have been in Paradise in order to find one’s way at length to the heart of such a subject! * * * *

511. TO HIS SISTER, CECILIE AVENARIUS, BERLIN

PARIS, *7th January*, 1862.

* * * If you but knew how strange it is to me to see, from this letter of yours among other things, how immeasurably little you know of the troubles of my life! How oddly it strikes me to read

¹ See No. 509, note 2, and No. 557.

there that in the great world and in my fame I forget everything unconnected with these!! How and where to begin to show you how different things really are!!

Enough, surely, that all my fame, all my success in Germany, have found me no place where I can collect my thoughts and prepare for new work. In the centre of Germany, I had to think myself fortunate to get an invitation from the Metternich family to live secluded in Paris with them for a time, in quiet and freedom from care. That lured me hither. In the meantime, the Princess's mother died and the father—out of his mind—was brought to Paris and given the rooms destined for me, so that I—am searching high and low once more to see if I can find a suitable room for myself and for my work—the one thing left to me!! Every one of my undertakings a failure—rebuffs on all sides—no idea what to do anywhere—no security—no income—penury and anxiety—no home, no family—nothing!—

Ah, what do you know about it!—***

512. TO PETER CORNELIUS, VIENNA

[PARIS], 9th January, 1862, evening.

*** Friend, you must come to me, once for all!—Think it over! I have thought it over already.

As far as I am concerned, the matter is settled. If I have not discovered at last what is the one great and true prize that life may yield, I must be a hardened sinner indeed. A friend, a man responsive, sufficient in himself, and at the same time utterly sympathetic to me! A man who could fail to recognise such a friend must be unworthy of him.

Hans [von Bülow] has often been inclined to be incredulous of my great attachment to him. With the good Hans, however, there are obstacles! And, you are free, and I believed I might take it that you were likely to remain so. But, nevertheless, when I ask you to come and live with me permanently as soon as I am settled, it is, of course, understood that the future is not in any way prescribed. It is enough that one should instinctively regard the arrangement as eternal. I should take it that you belonged to me as my wife does, that we should have everything, fortune and misfortune, equally and in common, everything as a matter of course. *** Understand me aright—you follow your occupation and I mine, but always like two people belonging to each other as a married couple do.¹ Things will settle themselves. ***

¹ The arrangement did not materialise.

God, how much I should like to have the poor Puppe too! In matters of this kind my morality is ineradicably *naïf*! I should think absolutely nothing of it if the girl were to come to me, and be to me just what her pretty little personality is capable of being. But how to find the *terminus socialis*? Ah, Heaven—it seems to me an absurd pity! * * * *

You can have no conception of my poem [*The Mastersingers*]. I can do no work upon it without growing disgracefully arrogant (how right you are!). It will be the finest product of my genius—I will say no more. * * * *

513. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

PARIS, Sunday, 12th January, 1862.

* * * * I shall hold to Wiesbaden for the summer in any case; there is much to be said for it; but for the moment your description has rather spoiled my taste for it and, in particular, I don't much take to the idea of plunging in winter among utterly strange folk and surroundings. Many other things accord with your suggestion to the contrary and have decided me to remain for the winter in Berlin.¹ At first I wanted to avoid this, fearing I might prejudice my prospects somewhat by a premature appearance there. However, no one can force me to appear in public, can they? I know a few families there who will help me to pass the time pleasantly, and shall look no farther. Bülow has offered me full hospitality, complete freedom to work undisturbed, complete freedom from worry and everything else, and now the Avenariuses have done the same. They will not be offended if I prefer the Bülows. Hans invited me to visit him last summer; they know the conditions, as they had Liszt to stay with them; I am intimate with him and in him have to my hand a pianist, a practical musician and an uncommonly attached friend, so that I shall like working in such surroundings. The Avenarius family, on the other hand, is practically strange to me—in spite of my sister. Moreover, Cecilie doesn't deserve it; she never came to Switzerland. * * *

Now, there is a great deal else going forward which may bring things to some sort of issue in Berlin. Indeed, it looks to me as if my remarkably uncertain fate there were about to take a turn. Lord, if it turned out to be no more than a small pension, how it would help towards our settling down (somewhere else)! I have had it given out in Karlsruhe that I am to conduct *Lohengrin* there, and read my new libretto to the grand-ducal party. Already

¹ Nothing came of this. See No. 514.

—as I know—the Grand Duchess (*this between ourselves!!*) has taken steps in Berlin. Well, we shall see what I shall be able to quarry out of this winter journey and its consequences.

There's one thing certain, though, Mutz. From this summer on we will try definitely to find somewhere to settle down. * * * *

514. TO THE SAME

PARIS, 15th January, 1862.

* * * Since last I wrote to you, I have had letters which to a great extent spoiled the idea of a long stay in Berlin for me. One from Mme. Frommann in particular. The thought of inspiring anyone there with terror by my arrival is repulsive to me. And if I settle there for three months, no one will believe that I do not intend to stay permanently. This is one difficulty!—

Now, however, I learn further from the Bülowes that they would have to try to put me up outside their house—something quite different, you see, from what I supposed from their first invitation. Not even an entirely unreserved welcome, I deduce.

I have no very encouraging idea of how I am likely to enjoy staying with Cecilie for any length of time. And at present I need greater peace and stability than usual for my work. I see that all this is useless, useless! I must and will establish a house of my own at the first possible moment. * * *

Wiesbaden has recently been described to me, by Mme. Frommann among others, as entirely suitable. You must have been very unfortunate in your experience there. * * * At any rate, I will soon go and inspect it. * * * We will talk things over thoroughly in Berlin, when I shall be able to give you exact and personally acquired information about Wiesbaden.

I see well enough that I must take my fate entirely into my own hands again. I am resolved rather to work myself to death than to wait about for these wretched princes any longer. Now I see that a publisher will pay for a new opera of mine enough for me to live on while I work, provided I live cheaply and quietly. Good, then! When I have finished *The Mastersingers* and launched it, I shall begin something else at once. I have enough *in petto*!—To-morrow I shall probably have completed the second act of the poem, which is turning out famously and will have a huge success—that's certain! * * * *

515. TO FRANZ SCHOTT, MAINZ

PARIS, 17th January, 1862.

* * I still owe you one more declaration of obligation on my part in regard to the money advances I have already received and

still hope to receive from you, and I will put it in writing in this letter without further delay.

Accordingly, I recognise and declare myself pledged from henceforth to sell none of my musical works, finished or to be finished, * * to any music-publisher, or to publish them printed or engraved in any other way whatsoever, without informing you or having given you the first refusal * *.

Following upon this, my new big comic opera, *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*, upon which I am engaged at present, will be next at your disposal. * * *

* * * My poem is making strides, and by the end of this month, January, I think of recrossing the Rhine with the whole libretto ready for composition. The hopes I have of my work have steadily increased. The first two acts having shaped as they have done, I am now sure of quite extraordinary success. I hope this will not seem chimerical to you when I—as I hope to do in a fortnight's time—read you the whole work, which when *finished* takes on an aspect very different from that of the faint indications of a first rough sketch. The music is already complete in my brain. God grant I may soon get between four walls, where I can once more evoke the tones of my dear friend the *Erard*, which is still standing here in the packing-case! * * * *

516. TO THE SAME

PARIS, 22nd January, 1862.

* * * If I had not had my work, I really do not know how I could have endured it, but I have shut myself up in it as in a last stronghold and—in four days the whole poem will be finished.

I am impelled, therefore, to find with all speed the nest in which to hatch out musically the egg I have laid.

I shall be ready, after making all necessary arrangements, to leave Paris a week to-day, that is Wednesday. * * * I shall then go straight to Wiesbaden, where I expect to arrive on Thursday evening. * * *

On Friday evening, then, I can be with you in Mainz, and please will you assemble for that evening the small and intimate circle we had before.¹ I want to read you my finished poem and hope I shall pass the test and show you that I am still good for something.—* * *

¹ On his way from Vienna to Paris Wagner had stayed in Mainz from 1 to 4 December, 1861, and read the sketch for *The Mastersingers* one evening at Schott's.

517. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

BIEBRICH (ON RHINE), 9th February, 1862.

**** It is a great joy to me that you have recently seen Cornelius. I feel as if I had been present on the occasion myself. As far as I remember, you got to be very fond of Cornelius when you were on the Altenburg. It was not till we were in Vienna that I gradually began to get on terms with him, but I discovered at last that he is really a most rare and unusual person, both as regards character and intellectual abilities. Actually he is the only one of the younger men (though he is well on in the thirties) to whom I can attribute real genius. His temperance, modesty, contented mind and great moral worth, however, give him a place quite by himself. I could only wish that this lovable man would settle permanently with us, but he pursues his own independent plan of life, which I must respect.—Well, he will have told you a lot about me and my schemes. He and everyone else think it much the best thing for me to settle in Biebrich. The advantage of this lies in the fact that if I never mean to take a regular post in connection with a theatre again, it is most important that I should be able to visit them all readily, while actually residing in a quiet and retired spot. ***

At Karlsruhe I talked with the Grand Duke for fully an hour. His wife had been taken ill. He will invite me to come again in a few days' time and, if possible—to conduct *Lohengrin*, too. I must say that at parting I grasped the amiable man's hand very heartily. It was obvious that he must have had his relation to me very much on his mind since the last letter ¹ (which I did not answer). He was really distressed and supposed I was angry with him. I found him strangely confused in his ideas as to my circumstances. ***—Despite this really most charming, and (I doubt not) pregnant, resumption of relations with the Grand Duke, I have now entirely given up all idea of settling in Karlsruhe, chiefly on account of Devrient, whom I have not even visited this time. I could never get on very long with this stiff old pedant, who, on principle, never does anything but support the mediocre, and, furthermore, has done me constant injury by his infamous talk about the impracticability of *Tristan*. I should lose patience some time or other and—God! Peace and Quiet is my motto now! I might fly into a passion, you know, with such an old blockhead! It will be a different thing to go there now and then at the Grand Duke's invitation.—

¹ The Grand Duke of Baden, also, was unable to afford Wagner shelter. See, further, Nos. 519, 523.

518. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BERLIN

BIEBRICH (ON RHINE), AT THE ARCHITECT FRICKHÖFFER'S,

16th February, 1862.

* * * * To your disappointment, I will tell you nothing of my recent torments, but simply assure you that Cosima is not at all wild,¹ and that I have had all sorts of other tame experiences as well (Madame Street Klindworth being among them). It was all charming—everywhere, everywhere two open hands stretched towards me—but upheld, politely waving me away. In a word, I know now where I am with regard to this side of life. Presumably the next thing I shall do will be to marry my wife again! * * *

519. TO PETER CORNELIUS, VIENNA

BIEBRICH (ON RHINE), *4th March, 1862.*

* * I am very unhappy and want to make my plaint to someone! But I dare not turn to any womanly heart, for I should only give it more pain for its own helplessness than I could get comfort for myself. That is, after all, the hardest thing to endure, to know oneself so utterly alone in one's troubles and anxieties and to have to decide everything by oneself. Then it came upon me like a whisper from Heaven that I have found you, now! You will understand me, and I can unburden my heart's sorrow a little to you.—

Dearest friend, it is quite certain now that I cannot possibly live with my wife any longer! You do not know how utterly everything is expressed in these few words. My heart bleeds, and yet I realise that I must fight vigorously against soft-heartedness, for the only possible salvation lies in firmness and frankness.

You know how greatly I yearned to get back to domestic routine, and that I believed I could attain it only through reunion with my wife. Well, while I was sadly trying to arrange my quarters here in Biebrich for the winter, my wife, knowing my necessity, suddenly decided to do somewhat as you did, and, instead of answering my letter, walked into my room just as I had settled my scanty establishment. My heart leapt, and in my great and joyous emotion she soon saw how it was with me. I reproached her with not having brought her parrot and come at once prepared to stay permanently, instead of which she had only come for a week to help me to settle down. Still, we at once discussed setting up house definitely in Wiesbaden. She looked bright and well, which was evidence to me

¹ See No. 499.

of how she always improves by degrees when she is on her own, and follows her inclination as to friends and manner of life wholly undisturbed by me. How I planned to find some way of establishing a lasting and tolerable life together by means of all kinds of wise conventions and indulgences, despite our totally opposed tastes, characters and outlook! It is true that from the very first day I felt our terrible misfortune in having no young thing to act as a link between us two, and realised that, being thrown so entirely upon each other's company by my taste for seclusion, we were inevitably exposed to perpetual friction. Still, my intentions were so good that I was quite willing to talk to her again in the queer make-believe language one uses to children and to listen with feigned interest to things which were quite outside my beat and often actually repellent to me. I tried with all my might to suppress a strange dread of that conscience in us which will not tolerate untruth, and fell asleep the first night in the peaceful belief that it would be possible to make the arrangement last. Next morning Fate intervened in a most remarkable way, leaving me this time all amazed before an ocular demonstration of its powers. Listen!

Since our last meeting in Venice,¹ there had accidentally been a considerable intermission in the correspondence between my friend Mme. Wesendonck and myself. Everything is so well understood between us and settled on a basis of complete abnegation that I only write to her now in a pleasant and friendly vein, the more so that friendship with her husband (a most upright man but—personal relations apart—one who bores me) had become so insupportable that I have given up any more regular personal intercourse with the pair, and only maintain a somewhat superficial interchange of letters, chiefly in order to ameliorate her hard life a little. In these last restless and difficult days I have preferred to be altogether silent. Thus it happened that my friend had heard nothing at all of my journey to Paris and addressed a little Christmas present to me at Vienna, which, after many wanderings, was eventually returned to her in Zurich. Later I wrote once from Paris, and told her of my proposed removal to the Rhine, whereupon she wrote telling me about the misadventures of her Christmas present and begging me later to give her my address on the Rhine, so that she might direct her parcel there. This I did while I was still in Mainz. For a long time I was without news. Then she wrote me a short letter saying that she had been in Düsseldorf to her mother's funeral, and I immediately sent her my deepest condolences. For these she thanked me at length, also for sending her *The Master-*

¹ See No. 510.

singers, and told me that she was just sending off the belated Christmas present. This letter arrived on the second day, and the parcel on the third day, of my wife's stay with me, and both fell at once into the unhappy creature's hands. Incapable of seeing my relations with that lady in anything but a disagreeably vulgar light, she refused to understand my explanations, which I gave purely to tranquillise her, and gave vent to her feelings in that vulgar style which, in turn, made me lose all self-control. She attributed my violence to the continuance of that lady's emotional influence over me, and—the whole insane edifice stood there again, unshaken and clear as daylight, before my eyes! I felt as if I should go out of my senses. Here was this woman, exactly at the point at which she stood four years ago—word for word, exactly the same outpourings, the same vulgar tone!—The storm over, I pulled myself together again. I wanted to regard it as a last thunderstorm of delusion before the weather cleared—to go on hoping and to gainsay no possibility. Now, however, the whole misery of the thing reappeared in good earnest. Jealousy, suspicion, ill-constructions put on every word! Added to that, our complete isolation here—long winter evenings alone with a being who does not understand my real nature in the slightest. If I take up a book, she cannot do likewise, she has no way of occupying herself. There was I, wanting nothing but quiet and peace of mind, yearning for my work, making terrible efforts to deal with my necessitous circumstances and my hard lot, and in addition unpleasantly affected by every word from without, gossip and the like. Finally, my wife's heart trouble began to come on again! Those were ten days in hell, and yet these horrible ten days have at least served as a final warning, and I cannot but be amazed that this grave warning should have come, in all innocence, through my friend Frau Wesendonck!

You may imagine how firmly resolved I am now! Curiously enough, it is always difficult for my wife (who, indeed, must equally find *her* hell in my company) to maintain in her calmer moments views which she seems to entertain only in moments of violence. When this time I heard her suddenly begin to talk again about setting up house, horror seized me! Ah, what misery to let such wretchedness go on so long! My wife will manage, for I shall always leave her the advantage of appearances! An actual divorce from her is and remains an impossibility to me. It is too late, and the cruelty of such a proceeding appals me. Accordingly, I have decided on the following way out. From next autumn my wife is to settle in Dresden with our furniture and household goods, apart from the few things I have here, and to keep a room reserved "for me."

Under the—actually valid—pretext that I need a retreat for quiet work, I shall continue to maintain a small lodging such as I at present occupy and—perhaps—visit my wife at times for a couple of weeks. This is what we shall give out to prevent things looking too serious! But how favourable must be the conditions if we are to carry out such an arrangement with even tolerable comfort! What it really means is that a man who is scarcely equal to supporting one establishment will have to run two. For I make no secret of it—my affairs are becoming more and more desperate! I can no longer help myself. The gulf between myself and the so-called musical world widens. My friend, I am unfit to meet others now! Whenever I meet a kapellmeister, or a theatrical manager, or even a man like Raff, I cross myself and try to creep away into some corner where I can be my own man. What am I to do about Schott's? I feel as if I shall not be able to help defrauding them utterly! My sole remaining hope is the young Grand Duke of Baden; in him there is native nobility of feeling, happily combined with an open and free intelligence. The man knows how things are with me, and is of the opinion that I ought never to have to *ask* for money for my works. Well, he is not rich nor powerful enough, and yet I am sure that very soon I shall get the one thing I need through him—somehow. And even now it is a comfort to be able to talk to him without disguise. What I should like is that he should take me up personally, and see that my life and work are provided for *in naturalibus*. I would then assign my wife a small pension. But, however this question of a livelihood is solved, even if fortunately, it will, I fear, be very hard for me to set my mind at rest about the real rankling sore of my life. I have such a terrible amount of compassion in me. It is awful to me to know that anyone is suffering through me!

Therefore, it cost me a really extraordinary effort to bring myself to see reason. I have seen with my own eyes that on any conditions my wife is better away from me than with me. Indeed, I clearly perceive that there is no real feeling of love for me in her. She only recognises the injustice done to *her*, and is inwardly quite incapable of ever forgiving it. But that is just how things are—the world we perceive lies *within us*. I picture it as different, however, and knowing the pain of true sadness, of deep love, my own heart bleeds. Ever since yesterday, when I left the unhappy woman in Frankfort, still angry and thinking only of herself, it has rankled in me and only the clearest consciousness that softness can only prolong the sufferings of *both*, has ultimately brought me—resignation.—O God! I grow sorrowful even to tears and say, “Oh for some kind

woman creature to take me gently to her heart!!” But I am closing that door against myself now! And so, I think, all my wife’s sorrows are revenged! * * * *

520. TO AUGUST RÖCKEL,¹ WEIMAR

BIEBRICH, 6th March, 1862.

As you can probably imagine, dear friend, manifold were the emotions which moved me each time I thought of our past, of your imprisonment and, finally, of your liberation! Accept my congratulations at this recent turn of events, but you are most of all to be congratulated if you find it possible really to enjoy your freedom. * * * As you are choosing open political agitation as the field of your future activities, you are—to be consistent—hopeful about public affairs and the future shaping of the world. In such a wide field, immediate personal anxieties about house and family must seem unimportant. You require more extensive relations with your fellow-men (of whom, indeed, there are as many as anyone could possibly wish). In short, everything which has become a burden to me and from which I flee on principle, is necessarily the object of your desire, and your senses, kept keen by long abstinence, will preserve you from speedy disgust. I shall continue to observe you with great interest, and shall rejoice that a fine intellectually able man like yourself has been kept fit for a species of activity, which I esteem most necessary, but in which I feel personally not the slightest call to participate. When I tell you that all I ask of the world now is that it should leave me alone to enjoy the only happiness available to me—leisure and peace of mind for my work—that I renounce all social relations, and am well satisfied with one willing servant and a dog, that—with the exception of one really wise friend (and him I honour rather as I would an angel)—I can do very well without visiting or receiving anyone, you will perhaps gain some idea of the strange feelings with which I shall watch you actively joining a political party and good-humouredly allowing yourself to be numbered with blockheads and scoundrels of all sorts! Still—that is your affair! * * * *

521. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

BIEBRICH, 11th March, 1862.

* * * * It is true that I have made it up with Devrient, for he has proved to me that Ander simply invented the whole of that conversation with him which vexed me so. But—but! theatrical

¹ See No. 522.

fry *are* theatrical fry and whether it was Devrient or Hülsen, it is all the old story; the attitude of the musical directorate here is the same to a hair's-breadth as it is everywhere else! In the end I sat through the performance of *Tannhäuser* like a meek lamb on the sacrificial altar and let the whole thing pass over my head while I secretly vowed—never to get myself into such a position again!—* * * Work, writing, and these to practical ends—that is to be my recreation and sole comfort, but let them spare me the performances. The lack of talents and ideas is much too evident, and if I were to interfere constantly, I should simply make enemies on all sides and worry myself to death. No! Rest—Solitude—otherwise I cannot hold out!—

Well, I shall try again with *Lohengrin* if Schnorr comes, but with Madame Howitz as Elsa!!—certainly not; I have said as much. Devrient declares she is excellent. * * * *

522. TO MALWIDA VON MEYSENBUG, PARIS [?]

BIEBRICH-ON-RHINE, 12th March, 1862.

* * * In these latter days there has been one period only when I really lived. That was the time when I shut myself up in Paris under incredibly perverse conditions, and, as if my life depended on it, wrote the whole poem of my *Mastersingers* in a month. I had finished it by the end of January, and the next thing was to find a refuge where I could write the music for it. I have achieved this at last here in Biebrich after countless difficulties, and so my whole time till to-day has been spent in continual conflict with unpleasantnesses and in the vilest of humours. To-morrow, however, I hope to begin composition. My intention is to have the whole finished by the late autumn so that it may run through all the German theatres next winter. Once there, I shall not trouble my head about it. This resolution alone has saved me. For an enterprise like this, I found I could get an advance from my publisher [Schott] to keep me for a year of work. The month's work in Paris was my happiest, but I could only preserve the spell by looking neither to left nor right; in the end I ceased to see people—only *garçons* and *concierges*. The poem gave me immense delight. I believe it is my most brilliant piece. I shall have it printed towards the end of summer. * * *

* * * As to my life otherwise, I avoid people as much as possible—my choice of a retreat will tell you that. Above all I am taking care henceforth not to have anything to do with the theatre and opera-house; I can only get light to create for these people if I do not see them——

I have been much interested in what you wrote me of Bakunin—I could almost see the man before me! He is and remains a tremendous fellow. Really one needs to make a study of the bear to account for a nature like that. Röckel has been released, too, at last; he has behaved splendidly and shown unshakable resolution. He boasts a bear's nature, too, and is delighted to be able to engage in politics and agitation again. Truly I have nothing against this, and am glad to see such people at their work, but it becomes too much of a profession with them and they acquire routine ideas and opinions which I must sometimes admire, even if I cannot find much substance in them. However, that does not seem to matter. The political formula has so many high-sounding names that it always looks important. I cannot help it, but I no longer see men in masses, but only as individuals, each of whom has his own way of thinking—and I mine! * * *

523. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BERLIN

BIEBRICH, 29th March, 1862.

* * * * When I spoke again with the Grand Duke of Baden early in February I could not help being very much touched by his pressing anxiety about my lot, and by his explicit recognition of the necessity for action on his part to provide for my livelihood in a fitting manner. He declared it his duty to see me provided, by the united action of several Sovereigns, with a sufficient pension, no obligations on me being attached. * * * *

My wife visited me here with the kindly intention of being a help to me in the setting up of my little household, etc. She stayed twelve days, which were sufficient to dissuade me from the "re-marriage" idea I told you of a little while ago. It is impossible from henceforth that we two should ever live together.¹ * * *

All my hopes are centred on this summer. *You* are coming—that is the chief thing! Then Cornelius will probably come also. Weissheimer, too, who is wonderfully devoted to me, and at the same time helpful and friendly through his talents and earnestness, will soon settle down here as a Biebricher. Heavens! How refreshing a summer so fruitful in friendship should prove! * * *

524. TO THE COUNTESS POURTALÈS, BERLIN

BIEBRICH, 31st March, 1862.

* * * * I need your help as a true friend, so that, for a time at least, I may be able to order my life, oppressed as it is by every

¹ See No. 519.

imaginable care, in a way to give me a quiet and tranquil frame of mind in which to complete my *Mastersingers*. It is the general thoughtlessness and stupidity which make it impossible for a life like mine, destined for nothing but artistic creation, to fulfil its destiny; which obliged me to conquer my dislike of intruding sordid cares upon a friendship so delicate, so purely artistic, as is yours for me, and to seek help in the only quarter in which I can be sure that my true needs will be understood.¹ * * * *

525. TO AUGUST RÖCKEL, WEIMAR

BIEBRICH-ON-RHINE, 5th April, 1862.

* * I have here a very talented young musician [Weissheimer], of whom I have expectations, and who is touchingly and self-sacrificingly devoted to me. It would advantage him for life to be provided now with a genuinely good poem as basis for an "opera." I have spoken to him of *Wieland*. Now tell me, my great politician, do you seriously think of becoming an operatic composer again? Honestly, I don't believe you do! For one thing you do not mention the libretto to me in any way. My opinion is that you will never come to the point of doing it and that, moreover, you doubt if you will yourself! My young friend's needs would be entirely satisfied if only he could exercise and develop his musical talent upon some poetic subject. Therefore, if—hand on heart—you really do not believe that you will ever be able to work out *Wieland*, I ask you bluntly to send the manuscript back to me here.² * * * *

* * My wife has now obtained a full amnesty for me in Dresden. I shall remain quietly here, where I have settled down quite tolerably and—up till now—have had glorious peace for work. This work, however, is at present the tyrant of my life. In every respect, inwardly and outwardly, it is the one thing that can keep me alive. I simply do not know where I can lay hands on a thaler if I have not something new ready for the theatre by next winter. Judge me for the present simply in the light of this necessity! * * *

526. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

BIEBRICH, 9th April, 1862.

* * * Here is my letter to the Minister, in which I express my gratitude to him personally and at the same time beg him to lay me at the King's feet!—

¹ The Countess gave him 1200 thalers. See also Nos. 529, 530.

² Röckel did so but Weissheimer did not set *Wieland* to music.

These few lines once again required a great effort, otherwise I should have given you some sign of life before now.—

Julius's death, a brief report of which had reached me previously through Louise [Brockhaus]—(no one else has written to me from Dresden)—we will—pass over in silence.¹ Your interest in him and the way you render me account of it all in detail, does honour to you and to your heart. I thank you for it! What you tell me of Fritz Brockhaus's conduct, in particular, touched me very much. Please give him my very kindest greetings. He, too, is a fellow who appeals to me very much!—* * * *

527. TO THE SAME

BIEBRICH, 2nd day of Easter [21st April], 1862.

* * * * I forgot to write to you about G[ustave] S[chmidt's] opera.² I was there. He gave it for his benefit night. It is the most miserable, vulgar piece of bungled work I have come across up to now. Yet he seems to know very well how to get himself written up in the newspapers. My child, regarded in the cold light of day, there is little enough to be said for that good man. The Frankforters knew very well what they were doing when they got rid of him. He is fit for no decent theatre and shows himself unworthy all round. The only reason that he took up my operas some time ago in Frankfort, was that Schindelmeisser (eccentric, but a not unintelligent fellow) had anticipated him with great success in Wiesbaden.—* * * *

Actually, I have done none of my new opera as yet except—the overture, but that has turned out very well indeed, and may very likely put all my other overtures in the shade. * * *

528. TO THE SAME

BIEBRICH, 8th May, 1862.

* * I have been expecting news from Karlsruhe every day and meant to await information, but it seems they cannot make up their minds to anything there. I have quite lost all desire to conduct *Lohengrin*. I answered Devrient's last silly report very shortly and, if the Grand Duke wishes it, I am prepared to tell him

¹ Wagner had always contributed to the small pension set aside by the brothers and sisters for his brother Julius (the goldsmith). His very poor opinion of this brother is to be found in a letter to Minna of 30 November, 1858, in which he calls him a "repulsive clown" and a "tramp."

² *Die Weiber von Weinsberg*, performed in Mainz.

the naked truth about Devrient's management. On the other hand, I have proposed to the Grand Duke that he should arrange a big concert performance—like that in Zurich—at which I would treat them to extracts from my latest works. * * * *

529. TO THE SAME

BIEBRICH, 21st May, 1862.

* * * * I still think my decision to regard the Dresden establishment only as a provisional establishment for *you* is wise and prudent, and best suited to my circumstances. My position, when you look into it, is plainly so forlorn and destitute that I should feel it wholly unjustifiable to dream of a permanent and comfortable dwelling-place for *myself*. My future prospects just now are utterly unreliable, and it is possible they may break down altogether, a state of things which is only to be remedied, perhaps, by a big new success. Countess Pourtales, who has just generously helped me out with much-needed funds, adjures me at the same time to expect very little, or preferably nothing, from the Court *despite* the absolute trustworthiness of the Grand Duke of Baden. Consequently, when my new opera is finished, I see myself cast helpless upon the world, and nothing but the project of a fresh piece of work would or could necessitate in future and therefore justify quarters such as I temporarily inhabit. Under these circumstances it would be natural for my wife to share in my varying and uncertain fortunes. Yet as she has already taken part with me in many similar troubles and hardships, my first thought is to give *her*, at least, security, and provide her with a settled establishment, and I am delighted to learn that a most suitable place has been found, for you have often told me of late that, now that you are there again, you feel happiest in Dresden. Accordingly, my principal idea is to assure you of a safe and secure haven in Dresden and to provide you regularly with the necessary means of respectable subsistence there. I personally suggest that some little room in your house should be my permanent home, leaving it entirely to *you* to make it homely to me. In the course of time and, we will hope, as the result of a successful new opera giving me better prospects, I reserve the right of extending the Dresden establishment to cover all my requirements, only seeking that, *whatever happens, you* shall always stay there safely, for that can be ensured at less cost.

And now, in face of these clear and distinct dispositions, I have to endure the pain of being told by you that I am getting rid of you, so that I can wander about the world, while you have to be

grateful for the charity of an invitation to Russia by relatives [von Meck] with whom you were once on the most unfriendly personal terms!—Really, I have no more to say.—

After the unfortunate outcome of *Tannhäuser* in Paris, I was advised (by Liszt in particular) to go to see Rossini, who has been receiving ill-natured reports of me in all quarters; and, indeed, Rossini himself sent to tell me he would be pleased if I would visit him. I thought to myself that a false and, to me, very humiliating construction might possibly be placed upon this visit, and, as I realised clearly that the good old man would never be able to understand *me*, and nothing but confusion could arise, I decided *not* to go to Rossini and preferred to incur the reproach that I had offended the amiable old genius.—I have just been handed an article, dated last year, from a German musical journal, giving a long and full account of a visit I am alleged to have paid to Rossini after the *Tannhäuser* affair with the object of getting his support and persuading him to intervene, whereupon Rossini is said to have dismissed me with witty scorn. Well, naturally, everybody has taken this to be true, and Weissheimer has been urging me to combat the lie, even thus late in the day. I have grave—and very sad reasons for not doing this and letting the matter rest as it is. No doubt this story will some day be included in my biography. As far as that goes, will not a heap of queer things appear there? Whoever finds *your* letters to me, will see it written down that my wife calls me and my conduct to her “heartless,” “brutal” and “vulgar.” So that will probably get into my biography, too. Well, I cannot stop it! But let us leave all that—and, above all, complete *The Mastersingers*. I have my hopes of it—and then we will see what next! * * *

530. TO THE COUNTESS POURTALÈS, BERLIN

BIEBRICH, 22nd May, 1862.

* * Rising from my work, I cannot let my quiet and solitary birthday pass without sending you, from the very depths of my heart, my most warm and grateful greetings. Having recovered from an illness, I found my work even dearer to me to-day, and I see clearly, and with certainty, that it is my greatest achievement. I am sure of its outward success. How could I enjoy this sense of gladness and exaltation without raising most sincerely thankful and appreciative eyes to you? And so, without knowing it, you have given me a splendid birthday present!

When some day you hear the prelude to the third act (I often

depart from serial order as I work), and then the chorus with which the people enthusiastically receive Hans Sachs, * * be sure you remember what frame of mind I was in on this birthday of mine! * * *

531. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

BIEBRICH-ON-RHINE, 22nd May, 1862.

* * * * I was suddenly inspired with an idea for the orchestral prelude to the third act of *The Mastersingers*. In this act, the culminating point of emotion belongs to the moment at which Sachs rises before the assembled people and is received by them with an outburst of intense enthusiasm. At that point the people sing solemnly and plangently the first eight verses of Sachs's poem on Luther. The music for it was ready. Now, as prelude to the third act, in which the curtain rises on Sachs sitting deep in thought, I let the bass instruments play a faint, soft, deeply melancholy passage, expressive of utter resignation; then on horns and sonorous brass comes like a gospel the solemnly joyful melody of the

Wacht auf! Es rufet gen den Tag;
Ich hör singen im grünen Hag
Ein' wonnigliche Nachtigall.¹

and the subject is then taken up with increasing power by the whole orchestra.

I am clear now that this is my most perfect masterpiece, and—that I am destined to complete it. * * * *

532. TO HIS SISTER, CLARA WOLFRAM, CHEMNITZ

BIEBRICH, 2nd June, 1862.

* * * * Living as I do at present, my sole care is directed towards preserving peace and tranquillity for my work—my last refuge from the world—and yet, continually threatened in this retreat by all kinds of intrusions, I am ultimately driven to hate almost any link with the outside world and to take pains to avoid whatever dissipates my time and attention. You would scarcely believe how well my efforts are justified, so constantly do I suffer from disturbances and disappointments; I often feel that I should abandon all hope of coming to an understanding with anyone and, more especially, that I should avoid forming any new connections. I have just come back to Biebrich from Karlsruhe, where a series of experiences ultimately forced me to tell the Grand Duke, in a

¹ Awake! The dayspring draweth near;
And in the thicket green I hear
A joy-entranced nightingale. (TRANS.)

very affecting conversation which I had with him, that I must resign the hopes I had founded upon his friendship, since I could no longer avoid making complaints of his Court Theatre director, E. Devrient, and, as I was very far from wishing to bring about his fall, felt my own resignation of these prospects to be a duty. As I journeyed back, reflecting on my future, the one sure refuge before me seemed to be the prospect of my speedy decease. Arrived at the house, I found a letter from Minna awaiting me, which made me terribly anxious about her. For really this letter seemed to me like that of a mad woman! She must be terribly wrought up again. God grant that her stay in Reichenhall may effect some improvement! Previous experience gives me reason to hope so. For the rest, I believe that some cessation of the correspondence between us and, for the present, the mention on my part only of what *must* be said, will contribute to calm her somewhat. She may regain her composure somewhat when she sets to work on the little establishment we contemplate in Dresden. For my part, I propose to stay here till I have finished at least the chief part of the work on my new opera, and then, in late autumn, join Minna in Dresden. I hope and wish with all my heart that Dresden will then gradually come to be a real home to me again. Beyond this I am utterly without plan or wish, so this hope is really the only thing I still cling to. The thought of home and kindred has great power, and even though I have not talked of it with any of my family as yet, I assure you sincerely that your nearness and the prospect of your society contributes very materially to my wishes as regards Saxony and Dresden. * * * *

533. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

BIEBRICH, 12th June, 1862.

* * * * The Management at Vienna have notified me that the rehearsals of *Tristan* (with Ander!!) are to begin in the middle of September. On the whole I am glad, as I have not written another word to Vienna, but I do not yet really know what my attitude to it should be. I had already contemplated a production of the opera next winter in Dresden, and I think, too, of setting about the matter privately. * * *

534. TO ANTON PUSINELLI, DRESDEN

BIEBRICH, 1st July, 1862.

* * * * I have ceased to look for happiness in this life. I do not deny that loneliness is often very hard for me; that the thought

of the intimate society of some sympathetic woman-creature often presents itself in flattering guise, and that I look sorrowfully on the desert remainder of my life. Nevertheless, I have never seriously thought of actual divorce from my wife. The things that I yearn for are no longer the things of desire, and all I ask is peace, tranquillity—as far as possible, forgetfulness. I would sacrifice even this wish if I might believe that I could thereby procure a comfortable existence for my wife. Experience, however, has most clearly shown the contrary. * * * *

535. TO FRANZ SCHOTT, MAINZ

BIEBRICH, 8th July, 1862.

* * * You are mistaken if you believe that when I address you as “friend”—a title which you do not think you can return—I am using the word in a conventional sense. You may still be in doubt whether I am *your* friend; this depends on your feelings! I for my part cannot explain your behaviour, your decision in my favour, as proceeding from merely business considerations, but rather as called forth by genuinely friendly sentiments. Accordingly, it is on good and well-considered grounds that I call you *my friend*. * * * *

Unfortunately, interruptions in my work have continued to be frequent. Still, it is progressing and is the sole pleasure incident to this strangely burdened existence of mine.—I have now begun the orchestration and by the end of this month a large portion of the first act will, I hope, be delivered complete to you. * * *

536. TO THE SAME

BIEBRICH, 12th July, 1862.

* * * * I am unbusinesslike and neglect many a favourable opportunity simply because I find business details tiresome. For some years now, Italians have at different times called my attention to the good prospects for my *Rienzi* in Italy, especially with the nation in its present mood, if once the difficulties of a first performance of this opera in the Italian language were overcome. Some time ago a Marchese Martinellini, formerly lord high steward to the Grand Duchess of Tuscany, made a translation of *Rienzi*. Quite recently one Herr Marchesi, of Vienna, offered himself for a similar undertaking. Since then I have lost sight of him and I do not think he got far with it. If I am to take the matter up in earnest, I believe that the enterprise should be initiated in London. The Italian

Opera there already has a French, and even a German, repertoire in addition. As regards equipment, chorus, ballet, etc., it is pretty well on a level with the Parisian Grand Opera, and consequently is incomparably better suited for a performance of *Rienzi* than the Parisian-Italian Opera, which as regards *décor*, chorus and ballet simply does not count. My idea, then, would be as follows: As you are London music-publishers, and business of this kind with the theatres is usually done there through the music-publishers, you might first of all commission a good Italian translation of *Rienzi*, get it performed by the London-Italian Opera¹ and publish an (abridged) Italian edition there, perhaps with English libretto added. I am convinced that interest in my work would be redoubled in London. Once this theatre has taken the lead and the opera has caused the sensation which at this juncture it has for many reasons so good a chance of arousing, the big theatres of Italy will be open to us. It would then rest entirely with you to decide whether or not you should resign the Italian rights of the opera to Ricordi.

Note, by the way, that with a London edition you would come into collision with nobody, not even with me, because in existing circumstances we can maintain no rights in the opera in England, where the work is *domaine publique*. It is, then, a question simply of an unencumbered and profitable piece of business for you. I hope you will make a big profit on it, and all I hope from it for myself is that, if it turns out well, you will deduct something from my outstanding debt to you.

As regards this last, I abide by the conditions stated in my letter to you from Paris.² * * *

While holding to my pledge, I may tell you that I have overcome my former disinclination to issuing a book of *Songs*, Raff having persuaded me of the saleability of such an article. I have ready to hand a collection of five compositions,³ which I count among the best of my works, for publication in German, English and French. I offer them to you forthwith. We can come to an agreement about the price. You can put it to my account later, but for the moment I am obliged to rely on your being able to make me this advance (which I conclude by asking as a favour) in the manner I have just suggested. My situation is, and continues to be, such that I cannot do without this special assistance. * * *

¹ Schott did neither of these things.

² See No. 515.

³ The *Five Lyrics* (by Mathilde Wesendonck), for female voice with pianoforte accompaniment. (1) *Der Engel*, (2) *Stehe still*, (3) *Im Treibhaus*, (4) *Schmerzen*, (5) *Träume*. They were published by Schott. See Nos. 538, 550.

537. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, ZURICH

BIEBRICH, 26th July, 1862.

*** My friend! The Grand Duchess of Baden believed she could trace some pleasant experience in my own life in my "Pogner," whose rôle I read with special warmth, and finally urged me to see that I get a particularly good singer for this rôle when I come to distribute the parts. I was quite extraordinarily pleased by the impression produced. I really feel that I have built a monument to a friend in the love with which I have handled this part—and now in the music too. ***

538. TO BETTY SCHOTT, STAYING AT KISSINGEN

KISSINGEN, 1st September, 1862.

*** For the last six months your husband has repeatedly encouraged me in the belief that he was by no means unwilling to assist me by further advances (of course against the theatre profits on my new opera), so that, despite my otherwise extremely difficult circumstances, I might at any rate be able to devote myself to the completion of my work undistracted and unhindered by anxieties; he was, however, obliged to ask me to wait for a suitable moment when he would be able to advance the money to me without embarrassing himself. *** To fill my cup of troubles to overflowing, a hurt finger¹ has rendered me quite incapable of writing for a considerable time. In the circumstances it was doubly important to me to employ my now recovered Muse most diligently, and I made every provision to enable me to work from now on uninterruptedly upon my new opera, which I have planned to finish by Easter next year at latest. At the very basis of all these necessary provisions, however, lay the supposition that Herr Schott was at last in a position to put at my disposal the sum of three thousand gulden, long since named by him, as an advance against the first profits from the theatrical production of *The Mastersingers*. ***

I have ** left no method untried to get on without his help. Everyone, however, would realise—and rightly—how impracticable this must be if the head of the greatest music business in Europe, if Franz Schott himself, who is bound to take the closest interest in the success of my works, has not the *will* to help me—for any statement that Herr Schott has not the *means* to do so would be received with incredulous smiles. It cannot be that the prospect of standing out of a part of his current receipts would prevent Herr Schott from assigning a few thousand gulden to an author in whose work he is interested. ***

¹ From the bite of a dog. See *My Life*, p. 833.

You may judge how seriously I regard my responsibilities to Herr Schott when I tell you that some while ago the suggestion was made that I should publish songs of my own composition, and I had the chance of making a very respectable sum by placing such a volume in the hands of a publisher. This sum, which was easily within my grasp, would have been extraordinarily helpful to me now. But it never crossed my mind to ask Herr Schott for permission to hand over this volume to another publisher for ready-money. On the contrary, I was ready to place every bit of my work in existence at his disposal to encourage him to believe that, even though I cause him some difficulties at present, he will assuredly not lack his reward.

How badly off I am now! * * * *

539. TO FRANZ SCHOTT, MAINZ

BIEBRICH, 3rd September, 1862.

* * * * It will be excessively difficult for me now to continue at work undisturbed. You could still do something decisive to contribute towards this end and thereby save me from a situation in which I might very shortly be obliged to abandon my work altogether. Therefore I ask you most fervently to put at least one thousand gulden at my disposal forthwith. Should you find this possible, be assured that I shall manage as regards my other needs without approaching you again, and that I shall somehow find a way of keeping uninterruptedly at my work till its completion. * * *

540. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BERLIN

BIEBRICH-ON-RHINE, 6th September, 1862.

* * * * Blandine's sudden death is simply terrible. I had already heard of it in somewhat greater detail from your account to Raff. The eerie, indeed devil-possessed, frame of mind which has been mine since I heard the news is very horrible. I feel as if this evil was designed to strike at me personally, as if it had been aimed at *me*, and at me alone. God knows what fate is yet reserved for me, but I am coming to believe strongly that some evil star is specially directed against me, to make me bring misfortune on my friends as well—perhaps in order to shatter once for all the tendency to be happy which would save me for *art*. Thinking thus I look anxiously at you, too, and demand of Fate a sign to the contrary.—* * * *

541. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

[BIEBRICH, 12th October, 1862.]

* * * * It was, in a sense, something new to me that this time not a soul has helped nor could have helped me, and I see that I must now deal with my fate on different lines. Just at present I am not occupied with *The Mastersingers*, but with the arrangement of pieces from my other works as yet unknown to the public (*The Nibelungs* in particular), for the purpose of giving big concerts, which I shall shortly launch in Vienna. In spite of the newspapers, I am not thinking seriously of *Tristan* there, as Ander is in just the same case as he was a year ago. Consequently, I must try something else. The upshot is that for the moment I am crushed to earth by necessary preparatory work for the concerts. I shall be glad, indeed, if I have got through enough to be able to leave here by the date of the final rehearsal for the Leipzig¹ concert. Pleasant gatherings with relatives and old friends are scarcely to be thought of under these conditions.

Hard as your life seems to you, believe me, mine is harder still. All the wants and embarrassments from which *you* suffer, bear for me the added reproach that *I* bring them upon you, whereas in this respect you know you are always perfectly blameless towards me.—* * *

542. TO FRANZ SCHOTT, MAINZ

[BIEBRICH, 20th] October, 1862.]

You are mistaken, my dear Herr Schott, you are greatly mistaken as to the manner in which a man of my type is to be handled! Much may be extorted under pressure of hunger but not the higher kinds of work. Or do you believe that I shall be serene and full of bright ideas for my work by day when anxiety keeps me awake all night? *The Mastersingers* would have been all but complete by now if you had taken due care for me since I settled here for the purpose of finishing that work. You had done enough—that I never cease to acknowledge!—in enabling me to undertake a work of the kind—but you were under obligation thereafter to go farther and * *—keep me in the mood to carry it through. Even had it cost you sacrifices, they were appropriate here, if anywhere, whereas parsimony or meticulousness were ruinous. Since the end of August—nearly two months ago now—you have simply left me in the situation of a drowning man. Ultimately you tell me you are ready to

¹ See No. 543, and *My Life*, pp. 837-40.

help a little, and yet you can find it in your heart to leave me to languish another whole long fortnight!—

Well, you, too, complain of lack of peace and quiet; perhaps I should give you the benefit of the doubt as to whether you contribute to your own peace by making mine an impossibility, but I can scarcely think it.

Well and good! You know what you are doing according to your own standard; I bear, and continue to bear, my obligation in mind, though I could wish, nevertheless, that I were able to pay my debt to you in ready-money instead of in manuscript—a thing which you, too, would prefer, perhaps? Whatever can be done shall be done, and if any good can come of torments, some good will, no doubt, fall even to my lot for—I am tormented!—

I felt that in the interest of the eternal laws of justice I ought not to spare you this effusion of a sleepless night. * * * *

543. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

BIEBRICH-ON-RHINE, 28th October, 1862.

* * To-morrow I am going to Leipzig for Weissheimer's concert on November 2nd. If rehearsals permit * * I shall run over to you ¹ before, but I have a great deal of other work in Leipzig, especially publishing business, and am afraid of breaking up my time, so I beg you not to *expect* me till the concert is over. Unfortunately, even then I can stay only two days with you at most, as I *cannot* go direct from Dresden to Vienna (where they urgently expect me), but must first return to Biebrich. The fact is that I have been unable to raise money anywhere, so that I leave a great many accounts unsettled here, and accordingly have been obliged to tell those interested that my impending journey to Leipzig was only a transitory visit * *. Therefore, if I had taken my luggage for the winter, I should have attracted inconvenient notice * *. God grant that I may be luckier in Leipzig than I have been elsewhere! I never before in my life experienced such a persistent run of adversity * *. So it is high time to provide seriously for the rest of my life, and this provision must be, and is, my chief concern now. I still hope for a decided turn of fortune in my favour in Vienna. Although I am in a bad way there with *Tristan*, I am pleased to see by many signs that the Metternichs have been very helpful to me recently and, moreover, that there is a real goodwill towards me in high quarters. This—for the sake of saying something to cheer you up a little! * * * *

¹ He did this.

544. TO THE SAME

VIENNA, 30th November, 1862.

* * * There is now a prospect of all the help I want from Weimar, so I shall be able to provide for you fully also, you poor thing. In view of an immediate purchase of *Tristan* and *The Mastersingers*, they have, by the explicit orders of the Grand Duke, asked my terms. My answer was such that—unless some great change suddenly occurs—I may hope shortly—in the next few days probably—to have all settled ¹ to my satisfaction. * * *

Things here are bearable. People, no doubt, are quite in earnest about *Tristan*! Yesterday we had the first full rehearsal. Ander is quite fresh and keen. There is a reason for this. Hitherto, conditions have been such that I could feel no confidence at all. So—with *very* great difficulty—I contrived to get Schnorr engaged for January next, which at least definitely ensures me some six performances from about January 10th on. That had its effect on Ander, and it is possible I may shortly have two *Tristans*.

I thought of giving concerts in the second half of January as well, but I have been advised to begin as early as December. It is the same with me here as everywhere else—the jealousy of the profession is extraordinary, and they do their best to choke me off. It will be a good thing, then, and have a good influence on the *Tristan* rehearsals, too, if I show myself as soon as possible in all my glory as conductor, and so forth. Besides—it will be good for my exchequer! For I see again that I shall lose all my personal influence over the higher officials here as soon as I begin to press the money question. * * *

As to affairs abroad, the state of things in Weimar is pretty troublesome for me. What the Grand Duke can give me by himself is insufficient for my needs, and, moreover, I should find a sphere of action so poorly endowed quite impossible—for I would not confine myself even to the Berlin or Viennese Opera—and it could have only bad results both for me and for him if present necessities should incline me to accept. I persist, on the contrary, that the three mutually related Sovereigns of Baden, Prussia and Weimar should unite to allow me a pension of three thousand thalers, in return for my services to each of the three on special occasions. We shall see what comes of this.—I must be all the more circumspect now, as this is a final, lifelong decision which I have to make. Besides—something extraordinary may very likely emerge in Vienna. I cannot, and I must not, tie myself down wholly and permanently to one place—for that would make an end of my capacity for production. * * * *

¹ This hope came to naught.

545. TO LUDWIG SCHNORR, DRESDEN

VIENNA, 10th December, 1862.

I am having an indescribable amount of trouble with the passage to bridge your cut.¹ Every time I set to work upon it, the mood forsakes me and I accomplish nothing. I am commissioning Cornelius with it now. If I should get nothing done at all, which is quite thinkable in my terribly over-driven state, it must be taken as a providential sign that *you* are to sing the passage entire without any cut. Be prepared for it. I make short work of it with Ander. I let *him* collapse after "*mich sehnen und sterben*"² and Kurwenal follow on at once with "*Mein Herr, Tristan!*"³ etc. Well, I may yet find the right way. There is still time.—* * * *

Best greetings to your dear wife!—If she would like to do me a great favour, will she sometime invite my niece, Clara von Kessinger (*née* Brockhaus), Wiesentorstrasse, No. 7, to her house? I am very fond of the child and she of me. Moreover, she is really musical, sings my songs very intelligently, and is longing to know you, so that she can hear my music in your house. * * *

546. TO THE SAME

VIENNA, 13th December, 1862.

* * So circumstances have changed again—this time hopelessly; my desire to see the *Tristan* rôle first supported by you is not to be fulfilled. I clung to it with the greatest tenacity. * * * *

Now that things have happened so inexorably, and every practicable scheme for our working together is crossed and shattered by your Dresden engagement—for me so unfortunate—I have to deplore, besides this piece of ill-luck, the fact of having held you up, perhaps even injured your personal interests, by recent delays. * * *

Nevertheless, I will not quite give up hope of giving *Tristan* with you at no very distant date. The Grand Duke of Weimar's ambition is suddenly set on me again. I am willing to promise him a performance of *Tristan and Isolde* in May,⁴ if he will get you for the *Tristan* and your dear wife for the *Isolde*.

All the rest should be studied in advance under Lassen, so that rehearsals in the theatre could begin on May 1st. We should have

¹ Schnorr clearly wished for a cut in the long song beginning "*Muss ich dich so verstehen, du alte ernste Weise, mit deiner Klage Klang?*" (*Tristan and Isolde*, Act III.). ["Must I thus take thy meaning, thou ancient grave refrain, with thy heart-troubling tones?" (TRANS.)]

² "Yearning and dying!"

³ "My lord! *Tristan!*" (TRANS.)

⁴ Nothing came of this.

half Germany present at this festival performance, and, in their own way, these performances might prove more effective than those in Vienna. * * *

547. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, ZURICH

VIENNA, 21st December, 1862.

* * I send you herewith the contract which I have concluded with J. J. Weber concerning the publication of the *Nibelung* poem. I could not get better or other terms, in spite of the intervention of my brother-in-law Brockhaus, who took part personally in the negotiations. But at least the copyright of further editions is secured thereby. At present, a piece of poetic literature by me is neither a valuable nor a dutiable curio! * * * *

548. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

VIENNA, 27th December, 1862.

* * * * *Tristan* is going ahead, and I have nothing to complain of. Still, it will probably drag on till February. Esser is working for me splendidly and is altogether an excellent fellow. * * * *

549. TO THE SAME

VIENNA, 8th January, 1863.

* * * * —I expected to hear some good news from Weimar for the New Year, but learned instead that the proposed Court Concert had come off *without The Mastersingers Overture*—otherwise dead silence in that quarter.—* * * *

I am still in the greatest uncertainty as to what to do. They are adjuring me *not* to withdraw *Tristan*. I recently made the proposal that I should produce *The Mastersingers* with the Vienna company, which, if it were generously adopted, might ease my situation. Otherwise I hesitate about an invitation to St. Petersburg, there to conduct two concerts of the Philharmonic Society, a business which would, anyhow, bring me in something certain. * * * *

550. TO FRANZ SCHOTT, MAINZ

VIENNA, 8th January, 1863.

* * Although it was very difficult, and not very remunerative, to choose out suitable fragments complete in themselves from *The Rhinegold* for my concerts in Vienna, such were very successfully extracted from *The Valkyrie*. Two of them, "The Ride of the Valkyries"

and "Siegmund's Spring Song," were so uncommonly popular that I am to repeat them in the third concert, and a desire has arisen to put transcriptions of them in the hands of the public. Tausig has been remarkably successful in making paraphrases of the kind for the pianoforte, and the local publishers are ready to pay a good fee for them. I have nothing against their publication. They have really nothing to do with my actual compositions and come under the head of transcriptions and fantasias, which, unfortunately, the original publishers in Germany have not succeeded in protecting. Nevertheless, the future publisher of *The Valkyrie* might prefer not to let these pieces escape him, and since, moreover, I have given my word to offer you the first refusal for purposes of publication of the remainder of *The Valkyrie*, I take the liberty of drawing your attention to these circumstances and of offering you both pieces¹ on Tausig's behalf.

The first of the two ("The Ride of the Valkyries") is extremely brilliant but also very difficult; nevertheless, it is such that, if the composition proves successful, the publisher may expect to see it standing open upon the rack of every pianoforte in Vienna. The second (the "Spring Song") is, on the contrary, very easy and should very rapidly become popular. * * * *

My most grateful thanks for the *Five Poems*.² * * *

551. TO THE SAME

VIENNA, 27th January, 1863.

* * I thank you * * for your kind consideration of Tausig's proposition. Unfortunately, the poor fellow was ill with fever at the time, and has only just recovered sufficiently to be able to send you the two pianoforte pieces now.

There is a general demand here for a repetition of my concerts, yet they give me so much trouble and I get robbed to such an incredible extent that I cannot feel any eagerness in the matter.

In the meantime, I am really happy about the study of *Tristan*. In a month's time we hope to be ready for a first performance, which will be excellent in some respects (especially as regards Mme. Dustmann). How I am longing for the time when I shall be able to take up *The Mastersingers* again! But shall I get peace and leisure? Unhappily that is a question which still weighs upon me very heavily!—

I am very surprised that our publications are so little assisted here by public advertisement. I myself first gave news of the *Five Poems* to my own friends here, and the libretto of *The Mastersingers*,

¹ See No. 551.

² See No. 536, note 3.

which, in Dresden, for example, has attracted much attention for the last fortnight, is absolutely unknown here, because no kind of advertisement has appeared. Families who are intensely interested in anything that comes from my pen, knew nothing of it up to yesterday. And yet there is not a doubt that now is just the moment for a particularly brisk sale, when the musical extracts from this work have been so well received and everyone is interested in the matter. * * *

552. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

VIENNA, 28th January, 1863.

* * * * The mainstay of my courage is the rehearsing of *Tristan*, which now arouses high hopes. Esser's splendid perseverance and tenacity have worked wonders. He has drilled the music into the refractory Ander as if he were a jackdaw. Best of all, though, Mme. Dustmann is heart and soul in her part. She moved me profoundly, and cannot fail to carry the audience off its feet. That is no longer in doubt and I count on a great, perhaps an unexampled, success.—

As I got no answer from Weimar about giving *Tristan* with the Schnorrs, I am already in treaty with Prague about it. I believe it will come to my giving my operas there, *Tristan* especially, with the Schnorrs, between mid-May and the end of June.¹ * * * *

553. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BERLIN

BIEBRICH, 16th February, 1863.

* * * * I shall get to Berlin by the express early on Thursday. * * *

I shall then set out on my St. Petersburg journey at the same time as you—Saturday evening at latest. * * *

The number of projects I have on hand now is really astounding, and I am surprised myself that I still have the stuff in me for all this running backwards and forwards—still keep my tranquillity. I am here to see what is to be done about the new house of which Frickhöfer told me, so that when I am finished at the beginning of summer I may know where to find a roof to my head.

You continue to give me advice, while keeping your reasons for offering it a secret, so that, not knowing the reasons, I am unable to estimate its excellence. Herr von Guaita has been repulsed with suitable contumely by me for his attitude in the matter of the fee for *Lohengrin*. I can well believe that instead of feeling ashamed he

¹ Nothing came of it.

merely feels angry. That, however, affords me no reason to visit him. Moreover, my relations with him have now become those of a rival, a circumstance which, though disagreeable to me, nevertheless makes me still less able to go through polite manœuvres with him. Poor Frederica's [Meyer's] case is a lamentable one, but it seems to be hopeless. She developed the most devoted confidence in me and I gladly endeavoured to prove worthy of it from so intellectual and talented a girl. Now, however, she appears to be deeply involved in this repugnant connection with Guaita, and her character, her shattered health, and the consequent interruption of her theatrical career, have brought about a situation in which she cannot wholly break with her lover. She is accordingly condemned to remain exposed to the most insupportable torments, and I cannot really do anything for her. She has given me much anxiety—God—who does *not* do so??—* * * *

554. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

ST. PETERSBURG, 5th March, 1863.

* * * * I should like to benefit by the sensation I make here, but God knows if I have time to do so. It is strange, indeed, that I should find in Russia the help I expected of right from Germany. But look at Saxony, my dear Saxony, worthy Leipzig, and ah! dear noble Dresden, where I was treated much like a mangy cat! I gradually come to be amused by my own bitterness. * * * What a good thing it is that I am at last earning something in Russia to enable me to pay, among other things, for the books H[einrich] B[rockhaus] took from me¹! And the shameless chicanery of the Saxon embassies, even in Vienna, where I am still constantly alluded to by Herr [von] Könneritz as the incendiary of the royal palace²! Ah! what a comfort the love and sympathy of one's Fatherland is to one!—

Really, if I can be patient and pluck up courage again to go on working and persevering, it may come to something.—But it is my last effort; I feel very exhausted and not good for much more. * * * *

555. TO EDITHA VON RHADEN, ST. PETERSBURG³

MY NOBLE, DEAR FRIEND!

VIENNA, 9th May, 1863.

I felt that I must tell you something good, something reassuring about myself, and yet I was first obliged to attain a certain amount of peace and quiet. I succeeded in arranging to see only a few

¹ See No. 195, note, vol. i., p. 200.² Cf. *My Life*, p. 850.³ *Die Musik* (Stuttgart and Berlin), July 1924.

intimate friends.—I have come to a rapid decision as to where to settle. Favourable answers from the Rhine are lacking and I have no real prospects there. On the other hand, the very thing I need was unexpectedly offered me in the neighbourhood of Vienna; an elderly Hungarian baron has offered me the very roomy upper story of his country-place at Penzing, with sole enjoyment of a fine, park-like garden with noble, tall old trees—all at a comparatively cheap rate for a long, perhaps a lifelong, let. The place is so arranged that I am entirely on my own and undisturbed. Impelled by the pressing need of speedily settling down somewhere, I have come to terms with the good old man,¹ and am now busy about my removal. I hope to celebrate my birthday by beginning work again upon my *Mastersingers*!

I am sure I did right to wait till now before writing to you. Would it have been any comfort to you if my letter had merely been a cry to you to drink draughts of Lethe?—Yet, indeed, that is the most blessed drink I know. I find it easy to remember—but what use is that unless one can forget? Even the wild notion that I might be able to do so some day, did me good, but that you should have helped to make me forget so easily remains a blessed memory to me.—Oh, do you, too, bear me in kindly remembrance; remember that you once met one who could render you unforgotten, and forget that you have any need to remember my weaknesses.—

What wonderful evenings those were! * * *

Strangely enough, my thoughts of our dear Grand Duchess chiefly centre in a longing to possess some representation of her features. Seldom has a face made so pleasantly inspiring and intimate an impression on me. The fact that at the same time I forget the Grand Duchess, ultimately matters not at all; but I have seldom met a more charming person of the female sex. Some rare kind of sun, benevolent and intellectual, seems to shine kindly upon me from that countenance. Whatever you do, do not forget the portrait for me!—In return (!) I am sending you copies of my *Nibelung* poem. They are being dispatched from Leipzig to your address. The parcel contains a copy *de luxe*, which I beg you, in my name, to lay most respectfully at the feet of our dear Grand Duchess. Of the two other copies, will you please keep one as my poor present to yourself, and will you be so good as to hand the other to our dear Fräulein von Stahl, whom I would so much have liked to steal out of your portrait-album, if the dainty little hat she wore had not suddenly set her at an immeasurable distance from me—about as far as Evchen from Hans Sachs! * * * *

¹ Baron von Rackowitz.

556. TO THE COUNTESS POURTALES, BERLIN

PENZING [*end of May, 1863*].

* * * * This odd situation of mine might be pictured as a restless search for rest. The terrible exertions of my Russian journey (of the issue of which you may already have heard something) seemed just such a chase to me, nothing more. * * * I kept * * * my fiftieth birthday all alone¹ by myself.—

The interruption my work has suffered since last autumn has had a marked effect upon me this time. I am still struggling to recover from a sense of dismemberment and distraction of mind, which has got possession of me as never before. My return to Germany shows me plainly enough that I can count on no support in my public artistic activities. My most painful discoveries on this head were made in Berlin. No one knowing the many favourable intimations I have long been receiving as to the Queen of Prussia's intentions, could blame me for having expected something to my advantage from that exalted art patron's interest in my work. Now, however, not only has the Grand Duchess of Baden's every effort to this end been wrecked by the wretched condition of the circumstances surrounding opera in Berlin, but I have actually been refused an audience by the Intendant of the Court Theatre [von Hülsen], to whom I sent in my name for the purpose of discussing my visit. Here, then, is a very decided end of the matter, and I have now abandoned all attempts to achieve anything in Germany which does not come of itself in the common way, like operatic success, for instance!

And so, while many a German prince esteems my art, and publicly proclaims an interest in me, there is nothing for me to do but to fall back entirely upon my own resources. To make this possible, I have to make use of my talents as a conductor and get enough to live upon by giving concerts in Russia from time to time!—* * *

By a most remarkably circuitous route (the music of my *Valkyrie* is to be heard now on the frontiers of Asia!) I have managed once more to house the Erard, to which you once nobly gave asylum, and have spread *The Mastersingers* once more upon the stand.

I have begun again, and I now solicit your blessing, my kind and noble lady! Take pity on me! Utter some potent charm to hold me to my beloved work and ward off the wretchedness and common cares of the world so that I may soon be able to show you a happy result of my labours! It is your need as well as mine! * * *

¹ Cf. *My Life*, p. 865.

557. TO FRAU ELIZA WILLE, MARIAFELD

PENZING, NEAR VIENNA, 5th June, 1863.

DEAR AND HONOURED FRIEND!

To-day, at last, I intend to write to the Wesendoncks again. But—I can only write to *him*. I love the lady too dearly, my heart is much too soft and full when I think of her, for it to be possible for me to address her in the form which now more than ever is imperatively imposed on communications from me to her. But I cannot write to her as my heart dictates without committing treason against her husband whom I love dearly and hold in esteem. What is to be done about it? I cannot keep all this locked away in my heart—one person at least must know how it is with me. Therefore I tell you—she is, and remains, my first and only love! I feel that now even more plainly. That love was the culminating point of my life; those anxious years of sweet unrest, when I lived under the growing magic of her nearness, her affection, held all the sweetness that my life has known. The least thing will recall it all and I am submerged in it again, utterly possessed by the marvellous melting mood which now, as then, catches my breath, leaves me power only to sigh. And were there no other occasion, there are dreams, which are always lovely and blessed to me when they bring *her* before me.—Now tell me, my friend, how can I speak with this lady as I must and ought to speak? Impossible!—Yes, I even feel I ought not to see her again. Alas! Even in Venice¹ our meeting made me very unhappy, and not till the memory of it has utterly faded can this woman be quite the same to me as once she was. I feel it; to me she is for ever fair, and my love for her will never cool, and yet I dare not meet her again—not under this monstrous constraint which—well as I recognise the necessity for it—would yet inevitably be the death of our love. What can I do now? Am I to know that my dearest is under the delusion that I have become indifferent to her? Surely that is very hard! Or should you wake her from such a mad dream? Would that do any good? I know not!—And meanwhile life passes and is gone! Oh, misery! * * * *

* * * Let me implore you—tell me something of our friend sometimes! * * *

* * * We love only once, whatever intoxications and flatteries life may parade before us. Yes, now at last I know, indeed, that I shall never cease to love her alone. You are capable of honouring the innocence of this protestation, and will pardon me for making you this confession. * * *

¹ See No. 510.

558. TO MALWIDA VON MEYSENBUG, STAYING IN ROME

PENZING, 22nd June, 1863.

*** Confess that there is nothing to be done with such a man! Give him up! While I was still looking about me, I thought to myself, "God! If Liszt were suddenly to write to me and say, 'I have found a beautiful house with a garden for you in Rome'"—should I go to Rome after all? Yes—but not willingly! Why not? Because I can bear no more strain, especially not now. I have been so terribly, so shamefully robbed of precious years of creative work that I believe the mass of new impressions from Rome and Italy would throw me completely off the rails. Proudhon says somewhere, in opposition to the people who expected the railways to do marvels for the intellectual culture of mankind, "*Le génie est sédentaire*." So it is, believe me! He who cannot construct his universe out of little, will still less be able to build it of much. And yet I say all this with a certain bitterness in renunciation. Heavens! how gladly I would stretch myself at ease there and let the marvellous world of phenomena flow in upon me! But everyone has his "daemon," and mine is a horribly powerful beast; he is absolute in subjecting me to his purposes.

** I am living here without social intercourse and all I want is to be unmolested so that I can finish my stuff [*The Mastersingers*] without interruption. I have become quite indifferent now as to whether I ever get any of it performed or not. Yes. I was quite glad not to have to take up *Tristan* straight away (Mme. Dustmann being unwell), following my violent exertions. After all, in the end one must fall back on what one is to oneself, so that the main source of satisfaction is to be able to have a little respect for oneself.

But then, of course, one ought not to be given such glowing accounts of Michelangelo, etc.—for then one's heart grows heavy indeed! Moreover, to comfort you, let me tell you that I read an Austrian newspaper every day, and when I see the news of the Polish insurrection I sympathise with it involuntarily, and altogether I am falling into many of my old weaknesses. But it is with me as with Goethe—I am not a good enough *hater* for true political fervour, and without this one satisfies no party. God! do you believe, then, that there is a single educated man in St. Petersburg who is not horrified by the proceedings in Poland, and who does not feel and speak on the subject just like us? But "policy," "government" and whatever else this devil's work calls itself—yes, that is another matter! And, believe me, we are not made for it, you and I; even Garibaldi is

not, Bakunin still less, but Louis Napoleon *is*, most certainly. And who would class himself with *him*! Pah! The devil!

Little Tausig is my sole acquaintance, a sensible young fellow, quite out of the ordinary. * * * *

559. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BERLIN

PENZING, NEAR VIENNA, 22nd June, 1863.

* * *—Well, solitary I may have been, and I have even taken up work again a little, and yet I cannot in good conscience say that all has been well with me. I feel more and more strongly that I need some pleasant feminine creature about me. One cannot live on mere defiant solitude. Where can I get what I want without stealing? Poor unhappy Frederica M[eyer] would gladly come to me, but what an abyss of difficulties and cares this would open up again! Faint-hearted and anticipating trouble in each new relationship, I have denied myself even a dog up till now. I want peace at all costs, and therefore the only thing I can do is to ward people off! You cannot believe what heart-pangs this still gives in regard to my wife! She writes very little, but when occasionally she does so she always makes me completely wretched. * * *

* * * Nothing in the world could induce me to set in motion against my wife the horrors of legal divorce.¹ Therefore the misery goes on and I live forlorn. Believe me! * * * *

560. TO FRANZ SCHOTT, MAINZ

PENZING, NEAR VIENNA, 12th September, 1863.

* * I regard it as a duty to you and to myself to draw your attention to the danger threatening the continuance and completion of the music of *The Mastersingers*.

Had you found it possible this day a year ago to give me an advance on my work of the three thousand gulden for which I begged so urgently, my work would have been finished now. At that time my one thought was to remain at work undisturbed. Instead, I was obliged to enter upon undertakings which would bring in money at once. The interruption my work was bound to suffer in the midst of such agitations could not but be very injurious. After indescribable difficulties, and having at last contrived to settle down at a heavy cost, I have just now got to grips with my work, when anxieties for my future livelihood and the necessary peace for composing

¹ See Nos. 534, 564.

begin to torment me again. I realise that soon I shall have to enter upon further disturbing engagements; indeed, that I shall have to go to Russia this winter (at latest) in order to get the wherewithal to live. The prospect disheartens me, because it has a crippling effect on work which must soon be interrupted.

Tormented by apprehensions, I apply to you again after a year has passed, remembering the friendly help you once gave me. I beg you now to let me have without delay that sum of three thousand gulden¹ for which I asked before, and then I will remain steadily at work (with the exception of a few small excursions for the purposes of my art) and can promise to let you have the finished opera (which delights me) very soon. Nearly one hundred pages of script of the score, in very small writing, are already finished, and I could let you have these now. But for the pianoforte arrangement I would refer you to Herr Tausig, who is in this neighbourhood. * * *

I have promised the Grand Duke of Baden a big concert at the end of October, the programme to consist of extracts from my new operas. On this occasion Hans Sachs's "Cobbler's Song" will be given, together with certain things from *The Mastersingers* which I have had already performed in Russia and Hungary, and I anticipate extraordinary popular success.—

It would give me great pleasure should you care to hear it. Also, so far as I am concerned, you might advantageously issue at once, in advance, separate editions of popular numbers (over-tures, extracts from *The Mastersingers*, Pogner's speech and Sachs's "Cobbler's Song").

Besides these, however (since my debt to you would, of course, exceed the value of a *single* opera), the pianoforte arrangement of *The Valkyrie*, which Tausig² is to carry out under my own eye, with special intent to make it easily playable, is also at your disposal. * * * *

561. TO EDITHA VON RHADEN, STAYING IN KARLSBAD³

PENZING, NEAR VIENNA, 14th September, 1863.

* * * * After my death, those who survey my life's vicissitudes will be amazed that a creative artist like myself, whose works were warmly received in many quarters during his lifetime, could nevertheless not get sufficient support from his contemporaries even to enable him to create. I have always imagined that a number of

¹ See No. 569.

² The still easier version arranged by Klindworth was, however, retained, though it was not in print till 1865.

³ See No. 555, note 3, p. 171.

wealthy art patrons would unite for this purpose. But suggestions like this were never taken up; a few princes were willing to take me on as "kapellmeister," but not in my own character as I am. Since my return to Germany all my prospects have finally vanished. When I set out for Russia last winter I was at my last ebb. I there made enough to start afresh, to build up my ruined life on a new basis by establishing a hearth and home in which to pursue my art.—You know what a difficult task that was. Intolerable domestic misery, lasting through years, finally forced me to live apart from my wife. I have to provide her with a suitable competence and a house of her own, and I do so with the earnest desire that she should lack for nothing. An exaggerated account of my Russian "fortune" spread abroad, and those who had claims on me (and for long periods of my life I was obliged to enter into all kinds of liabilities) began to press me, often in very peremptory fashion. "Settling down quietly" meant, for me, bringing nothing but troubles upon my head. The desire and need for a sufficient competence again became really urgent. The fate of *Tristan*, which had to be definitely abandoned only because of the certificated incapacity¹ of the soprano here to carry through the leading female rôle, rent the last strand of the hope which still attached me to the theatre.—

I then began to ask myself—and you too—why I had not remained with you in St. Petersburg.—But now that I am here again and settled, though at great cost, actual emigration to St. Petersburg seems impracticable, even if I could find suitable employment there. Could I not, however, contract to visit St. Petersburg for a few months each year? The truth is that even in St. Petersburg I can do nothing for art save by means of exceptional performances. The only opportunity for these is in Lent. Besides, while I am a dramatist, and as such could have no part in the operatic life of St. Petersburg as constituted at present, I am at the same time a virtuoso in another sense, that is an operatic conductor, and in this rôle I can offer "personal" achievements which the world at large recognises and values, although my "works" really exist only for the few. If the management of the Imperial Theatre would engage me for a period of a few years, say five, to conduct a series of big concerts in Lent, to give a series of the best things perfectly, I should be able to promise the St. Petersburg musical world the following advantages!—The St. Petersburg orchestra would become the first in the world; the ordinary type of concert, which has hitherto filled the pockets of speculative concert-promoters during Lent, would cease; instead, the general taste in music would be raised to

¹ Ill-health of Frau Dustmann. See also Nos. 551, 552.

a critical level which would make it possible to produce later on something noble, and, I hope, even in a national sense important, in operatic as well as in concert music. Of course I am presupposing that it is possible to get it clear that the honour of art is the sole determining factor in the invitation extended to me. My engagement once understood in this light, I should have to consider remuneration, and this would have to be calculated not on what I brought to the management in money but in honour. For in this engagement I should hope for the advantage of being raised above the necessity of looking elsewhere for funds, at least for the period of years covered by the agreement. I estimate that I should require for this purpose a yearly salary of five to six thousand roubles. You will admit that I have conceived a high opinion of Russia when I make a proposition like this, for it would be senseless did I not count on being met by a high sense of honour and a very [sympathetic spirit]. * * * I attach great importance to these schemes for the further reason that I look to the speedy conclusion of some such engagement as my only hope of assistance in present difficulties. My poor *Mastersingers*!!

I have just got to the point of feeling a genuine craving for work returning. After dreadful interruptions I am about to devote myself exclusively to satisfying this craving, when I am besieged by cares again, cares which with my advancing years have an increasingly dispiriting effect on me!

If I could only finish my *Mastersingers* now! So I sigh from my inmost soul! This work has an extraordinary attraction for me; in it there appears for the first time an element of cheerfulness, a delight in gay and graceful detail, quite absent in my earlier passionate [operas]. I believe that undisturbed work upon this opera would be my salvation, would make me a new and happy man *. This work should lead me through the portals of mild resignation into a new and final stage of my career in which I might hope for comfort and healing for the pains and sorrows of my past life. * * * Do *something* to keep me at work on my *Mastersingers*, so that I may finish it undisturbed! * * *

But what can you do? Lay the poor *Mastersingers* at the feet of our dear Grand Duchess, entreat her on my behalf for quiet and freedom from care at this intensely critical time, a moment which must actually decide whether my Hans Sachs is to live or not!! How to accomplish this? Ah, if I only knew! You would not believe how forsaken I am, how strange and alone I am among all the people here!—* * * *

562. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

PENZING, 15th December, 1863.

Just a short note! I have been back since the 9th of this month. * * *

The worst of it is that I am so exhausted by this musical tour that I cannot contemplate continuing or repeating it. *Impossible* to go to Russia. As to what is to happen to me without this resource, however, my mind is a blank.

In Löwenberg I joined the Prince, a very good-natured man, who unluckily is too old and has been too much drained of funds to be of use to me. In Breslau I felt utterly humiliated and wretched.

I renewed an old acquaintance to some purpose! Frau Wille's sister, Frau von Bissing, came to the concerts in Löwenberg and Breslau. My great weariness and nervous prostration, for which she most kindly made allowance, spoiled the freedom of our intercourse, and yet the few hours we spent together were of the deepest value to each.

I hope Cornelius will come out to visit me daily, despite wind and weather. I strive, with curiously bitter anxiety, to preserve my refuge here. * * *

563. TO HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW, HEINRICH WOLFRAM, CHEMNITZ

PENZING, NEAR VIENNA, 16th February, 1864.

* * Warmest thanks for your amiable letter!

Unhappily, all the pleasant things it contained faded before the news of Minna's condition. God knows how greatly I myself stand in need of comfort at present, but it seems that I am to get no peace! Up till now I have usually heard that the poor woman was tolerably well. Ottilie Brockhaus, who left her a few months ago, actually wrote of her robust appearance. I found this very comforting, for my only purpose in our separation was simply to avoid mutual friction. Therefore I have really let her want for nothing, and many people have even reproached me for doing this so lavishly, knowing that I am always in difficulties for money for myself. Well, I at least had the comfort of believing that she was well, if only outwardly, and that even her mistaken opinion of my character and nature, which she never can understand, contributed to that end.

And now the short description of her state contained in your letter has surprised and affected me terribly. I cannot compose myself, and weep without ceasing! I cannot tell you how grieved

I am for the unhappy woman!—Of course I wrote to her at once—I hope comfortingly and encouragingly.—* * *

It has now become a life-and-death question with me whether I shall be able to keep at my work undisturbed and get *The Mastersingers* ready for the theatres next winter. I have been dreadfully interrupted over and over again, so that I have sometimes thought I should be obliged to abandon the work altogether. It is all-important for me, therefore, not to stir from this place or allow any change in my circumstances until it is quite finished. * * *—A catastrophe involving Minna now would ruin me for ever. Oh, if only she will get well, and quietly leave all other anxieties to me! * * *

564. TO EDITHA VON RHADEN, ST. PETERSBURG ¹

PENZING, NEAR VIENNA, 14th March, 1864.

* * What you tell me has * * cleared my mind completely! Indeed, I knew when I took leave of you a year ago that there were no further prospects for me as a concert-promoter, either in St. Petersburg or Moscow. Nevertheless, I decided a week ago to go to St. Petersburg, less in the hope of a successful enterprise than with the intention of settling there. I wanted to throw myself at the feet of our dear Grand Duchess and entreat her to take me into her household—under whatsoever title—and give me a quiet room, food, attendance and pocket-money amounting to a few hundred roubles per annum. I had ceased to fear the terrible climate. * * *—I was sure of your pleasant society, for which I know no equivalent here or elsewhere. Well, you are secure now from the threatened invasion. I hope to be able to greet my noble benefactress and you in Germany next summer. We can discuss the matter quietly then. * * *

I am involved in no mere crisis, but in final ruin. For the first time I have tried to make a settled home for myself, all by myself. Only very favourable conditions could have made this an enduring possibility. Instead, I am just on the point of giving it up entirely, for since my last direct attempt last autumn to get a plain declaration of what I had to expect from Germany, I cannot by any method scrape up funds to meet expenses. There is no “place” for me, anywhere.—

My depressed state of mind now unfortunately affects my health. I am constantly in the doctor's hands, but that would not matter much if only I could work at the same time. But weeks, long weeks, go by in which I am barely able even to read a little. I keep on working to some extent, but very slowly, for I *cannot* write down

¹ See No. 555, note 3, p. 171.

what does not please me and I so seldom have an idea which pleases me now. Probably you cannot guess how sorrowful my life is? I have come to see clearly enough that I am incapable of "earning," of "keeping myself."—The few friends who trouble themselves about me in my miserable and utterly forsaken condition, see this too. They realise that my lot must be entirely changed and believe the only method is for me to make a prudent marriage with a woman of means. Whatever the circumstances I can only laugh at this suggestion.¹ As if it were an easier way than any other! But, above all, no earthly advantage could persuade me to subject the poor woman, whose only real fault after all was in allowing me to marry her, to the disgrace of legal divorce with all its necessarily shocking proceedings.² On the contrary, it is my care for *her* lot which makes it absolutely necessary for me to look about for definite help. I allot one thousand thalers a year to my wife, who is settled in Dresden. Hers is a hard lot and I feel responsible that she should not be further crushed by want of outward comforts and proprieties. Besides, she is the victim of a terrible malady, necessitating constant and costly treatment. She can only just manage on the income assigned her and I am most careful to have the quarterly payments made punctually to her. What to do to keep myself alive, I cannot at the moment decide. I am making efforts to get a wealthy family of my acquaintance to take me in, thereby reducing my living expenses to nothing, or only to a little pocket-money. I *must* succeed; there is no other way out. I can only hope to keep fairly well, and get the necessary peace and quiet for work, if I am relieved of the necessity to earn money, and I can only achieve this by becoming and remaining personally poor and without possessions. But I cannot involve my wife in the same lot. I must provide the necessary thousand thalers per annum for her. Oh, if only this last burden could be lifted from me! I appeal most solemnly to your noble and sympathetic heart, and entreat you very humbly to put the matter before our deeply honoured Grand Duchess! I feel that she will take pity on me. It is my most solemn plea—I believe it is my last! To put the matter clearly, I beg Her Imperial Highness, in consideration of the fact that she may largely contribute to a final settlement of my affairs by so doing, to allow me a pension³ of one thousand thalers from April 1st of this year, to be paid directly by Her Imperial Highness in quarterly instalments of two hundred

¹ Yet Wagner himself seems to have thought seriously of a marriage with Frau Henrietta von Bissing, Eliza Wille's sister. Cf. *My Life*, pp. 880, 881, 884.

² See Nos. 534, 559.

³ The Grand Duchess Helene probably helped him at once. See No. 567.

and fifty thalers on April 1st, July 1st, October 1st and January 1st each year, to my wife, Minna Wagner, 16 Walpurgisstrasse, Dresden. —This pension, if graciously accorded, to cease at the death of my wife. And—here comes the sad fact, which, sad as it is, yet gives me hope that the Grand Duchess will not find the fulfilment of my request an impossible additional burden upon her budget. For six years my wife has suffered from heart-disease, which, pronounced incurable from the first, has since made such terrible advances that I * * must be prepared for her speedy decease. * * *

* * * I am most warmly grateful also for Her Imperial Highness's last allowance, safely received. This sum has helped and is helping me to support this last sad change in my affairs. * * *

565. TO FRAU ELIZA WILLE, MARIAFELD

PENZING, NEAR VIENNA, 14th March, 1864.

* * I beg you to consult with our friends as to whether it is possible for them to take me in this summer. In that way the object of these recent struggles of mine might be attained. They arose because, for the sake of being able to remain peacefully at work, I tried to avoid the necessity of a long concert tour in Russia by borrowing a sum of money equivalent to the takings I might have made there. The fatal plight in which I eventually found myself when, the Russian offer having been let slip, the money was not to be obtained, is now in process of being alleviated. Certain people who keep watch at close quarters over me and my affairs, and are able to form an opinion, found it possible to understand, to excuse, and accordingly to find the remedy.

As, however, I see that I must abandon my quarters here in any case, as too expensive, the immediate problem is to find quiet and suitable accommodation to serve for the period still required for the completion of my *Mastersingers*. From a purely practical standpoint, this could best be found in the Wesendoncks' house. There are, indeed, valid objections to a permanent removal thither, but I do not contemplate this. On the completion of my work, which may be effected by the end of this summer if I am quite undisturbed, I shall go to St. Petersburg, probably to remain there for good; should I not make up my mind to this definite emigration to St. Petersburg, I shall probably go to relations, as I badly need a family to which to attach myself.

Just now, however, it is merely a question of some easily-attained refuge for the prosecution of my work, which otherwise would come near to entire and permanent abandonment.

Well, as earlier invitations to make my home with them for a time have not actually been withdrawn by my friends hitherto, I find in them my best and certainly my last hope of saving my work.¹ * * * *

566. TO PETER CORNELIUS, VIENNA

[MARIAFELD, *end of March*, 1864.]

* * I would have preferred not to write to you till to-morrow, because I shall then be more sure of my position than I am to-day. Yet on the other hand it is important for me to do what I can to ensure that my departure from Vienna passes off as smoothly as possible and without hostile remark, to which end I should like, through you, to ask our good friends Standhartner and [Edward] Liszt to do nothing hasty. I have already written very fully from Munich to Liszt on this point, particularly about what I wish done with the house and furniture. It is not impossible, should I get my money affairs settled, that I may be able to come myself to Vienna for a few days, pay some accounts, and, in consequence, effect an orderly removal from the house at Penzing, and make provision for the things I want kept. As I say—it is a possibility!

As regards my recent flight from Penzing,² I have made a remarkable discovery about myself. Compared with the cold, bitterly indifferent mood in which I once left my homes in Dresden, Zurich and Paris, I found that this time my feelings were warmer, friendlier, sadder. Then I realised that, despite the want and anxiety endured in the Penzing house, as in the others, none but kindly and gentle impressions of the place, its men and beasts, remained with me, whereas before, the torment of my matrimonial sufferings had embittered me so that I was always glad to leave all behind. * * * *

Fate has led me strangely in my flight hither. He—Dr. Wille—left a few days ago on the excursion train for Constantinople, and will not be back for five weeks. Till then I shall be alone here with his wife, and two sons aged sixteen and eighteen. Frau Wille seems destined to take a hand in my fate. She is as true as gold and unshakably my friend. Moreover, she is the most intimate and sympathetic friend of Frau Wesendonck, and—of her own sister, Frau von Bissing, of whom you have heard. These three ladies, as I see now, love me equally, only Frau von Bissing³ was recently

¹ Otto Wesendonck gave Wagner the cold shoulder. Cf. *My Life*, p. 884.

² See No. 570.

³ See No. 564, note 1, p. 182.

so smitten with jealousy (I never guessed it!) that, till this discovery, her behaviour to me was incomprehensible! But I have been able to tell Frau Wille everything unreservedly about my real needs, my true purpose in this life, and now she understands me completely and realises that what I need is decorous peace and quiet, not any exciting relationships. I have found in her a really admirable intermediary in all quarters. We shall see, then, what these three excellent women together will accomplish under her leadership. For the present I remain here—glorious, wonderful!—* * * *

567. TO EDITHA VON RHADEN, ST. PETERSBURG

MARIAFELD, NEAR MEILEN, CANTON ZURICH, SWITZERLAND.

3rd April, 1864.

* * Just one word, I conjure you, to give me hope!—I am extremely unwell. I have found refuge here on Lake Zurich for the last ten days, with a family I used to know. Personally I hope to find shelter here till the end of this summer, and ultimately, no doubt, should attain peace of mind to take up that work for which I have suffered so much. But, as I am quite helpless in other respects, I lack assurance that my wife is provided for. Oh, could you but give me this comfort!—

Believe me, I know of no one to whom I can turn for this help but our dear Grand Duchess! That is how it is with me. But if you will and can give me the ease of mind which is indispensably necessary, send me a word of comfort. When last I wrote from Penzing¹ at the beginning of March, I believe I said all I could say to bring my situation home to you. * * *

568. TO PETER CORNELIUS, VIENNA

MARIAFELD, 8th April, 1864.

* * The true origins of my sickness and loathing of life are discoveries recently made as to the *superficiality* of the sympathy of even the most sympathetic persons! These days I wait in anguish from hour to hour for the coming of the postman to bring me some sort of reply to my urgent appeals, both to you and Standhartner, for news of the state of my affairs after I left. Standhartner is good enough to-day to forward letters addressed to me at Penzing and yet adds not a word, not a greeting of his own! Can't you understand that this is bound to alarm me even more than the worst of news? Or does no one write simply because you all wish to avoid the pain of telling me something painful?—* * *

¹ No. 564.

My future course entirely depends on how the past is settled; it is from this that I must deduce what lies before me. If things continue as disastrously bad as they have been hitherto, I must cease to expect any good and I have already come to feel that every hope is vain. Anyone taking my age and past history into consideration would feel that it is extremely doubtful if, in this frame of mind, which naturally sickens me of life, I can possibly delight in artistic creation.—* * * *

My situation is perilous; I balance on the narrowest foothold—one push and all is over—there will be nothing more to be got out of me then, nothing, nothing more!—

Some light must show itself, *someone* must arise to give me vigorous *help now*, and *then* I shall still have strength to recompense that help—but *later* I shall not, I feel it!—

My friend, Switzerland has become for me a cemetery, and I should have done better to go anywhere else than here, where all is bitter to me and speaks of death.

And yet nowhere else could I have met the one person, the one human creature who could do me good at present, my hostess, the one and only Frau Dr. Wille! This lady is above all praise, incomparable, unique. What can be done is done to offer me a pleasant refuge well adapted for work. She even makes an effort to raise at least enough money for me to dare to hope to be able to pay my local creditors something shortly, and thus do something to improve the apparent shamefulness of my departure from Penzing. * * * *

But perhaps—it is all no use now! Indeed, I feel deep within me that the end approaches. Ill-health does its worst to rivet this mood. I am languid again and much afflicted by my bladder troubles. * * * As I have said, some benevolent saving miracle must come to me, otherwise all is over!—

Your terrible silence seems to tell me that this blessed miracle is on its way!—* * * *

569. TO FRANZ SCHOTT, MAINZ

MARIAFELD, ZURICH, 25th April, 1864.

* * "Man proposes and God disposes!"—After I last wrote to you from here, a bad illness (typhoid fever) overtook me and robbed me of power to do anything till now. Now I am recovering and am shortly going back to Penzing to finish *The Mastersingers* at a sitting. I am about to conclude a bargain with the Viennese Opera for a first performance of the opera in the course of next January.¹

¹ Nothing came of this.

* * * The principal part of the whole is roughly drafted and the first act is finished in every detail. The last page of the full score must be in the hands of the copyist by the end of the year. Please do your part to help! Begin to print at once. If you had already done so, I would now send you another large consignment of the manuscript, but since you have not yet begun and I am going back to Penzing, and as Tausig is still in Vienna, I will have Act I. arranged by him first. At the end of May you shall have this remainder with the pianoforte arrangement. I give you my word of honour not to abandon this work, which is of first importance to me now, and to deliver it to you complete and ready for performance by the end of this year. I am ready to enter into any formal agreement to this effect. Last autumn you offered to pay me the advance of three thousand gulden I then asked you for, in monthly instalments of five hundred gulden in return for my undertaking to have the work finished in six months. * * * Since you have been so kind as to place the first fifteen hundred gulden actually at my disposal, will you now please make me the other payments in monthly instalments of two hundred gulden? In this way I can be secure of a peaceful livelihood just for the period of my work. * * *

570. TO HEINRICH PORGES, VIENNA

MARIAFELD, NEAR MEILEN, ZURICH, *27th April, 1864.*

* * * Knowing your sympathy and devotion, I feel I may attribute to you yet another virtue which is lacking in the few other friends with whom I have been intimate of late, namely, precision. When it is a question of exact and punctual accounts of things in letters, I cannot rely on Cornelius. My friend Standhartner and Dr. Liszt, who is associated with him in looking after my affairs here, recently proceeded in a way to make me very doubtful either of their capacity or their intention of carrying out my wishes! To get accurate information, therefore, I turn to you.

The first sign of life I received from Vienna since I left it, came from O. Bach. His letter touched me deeply, and with an eye rather to his suitability as mediator through knowing the right people than to his own means, I suggested that he should enable me to return to Vienna by raising funds (later to be repaid) to cover the bill which falls due on the 30th of this month, and which Tausig, among others, has backed. * * *

My principal object was to be able to return immediately and take up my work. As my Penzing quarters were still unlet, I got

from a friend here the sum requisite to pay the half-yearly rent in advance. In addition I took steps to come to an agreement with my publisher [Schott], on terms which will provide me with the means of livelihood till *The Mastersingers* is finished at the end of this year. On this basis, I only awaited notice of the settlement of this business of the bill, to return and at once resume my work amid the domestic comforts of my house, which are so helpful to me (although I am quite willing to consider changing it for a smaller one). I informed Herr Dr. Liszt of my intentions and told him that I would send my house-rent to the landlord at the proper time: I have now actually done so. Whereupon I heard yesterday that my two attorneys have thought good to conclude a settlement with my landlord in order that they might be able to sell my furniture for some trifling sum! The ostensible reason for this proceeding was to make it impossible for one of my creditors to take legal proceedings and have it sold up, but the actual reason was chiefly to get a little ready-money to satisfy the same creditor, with whom, for the matter of that, there have been no negotiations as yet, and who was not expected to present himself till the 30th of the month!—* * * I could have been sure of conducting the matter on satisfactory lines had I negotiated with these people personally, and I recognise my mistake in leaving Penzing at that time. I ought to have remained. One thing, at any rate, would then have been certain—the first act of *The Mastersingers* would have been finished by now. * * *

You will see from all this how very important it was for me to be able to return to Vienna with all speed, the reason being the necessity of planning for the completion of *The Mastersingers* at all costs. Here, where I am now, I can find shelter only for a short period. Where am I to go? There is no house to which I can go where I should find the conditions necessary to attune my mind for work, because, for one thing, an entirely strange environment distracts me. I am at last becoming very much aware of one principal need, *musical society*, that is to say frequent intercourse with musicians in sympathy with me, who will understand without difficulty when I discuss my work with them; also I need a pianist.

Now from this point of view my little circle of friends in Vienna was all I could wish for. You know that circle, and are indeed at its centre. For me it is a possession which I cannot easily replace elsewhere. I am determined to cling to it, despite the worst of bad luck with regard to my other possessions.—* * * *

* * * Please collect information about summer residences, furnished or unfurnished according to circumstances, in Dornbach,

Nussdorf, etc. (only of course not in Hietzing or Penzing). My chief demand is to be secure from piano-playing close at hand. It is possible you may be so fortunate as to find the right thing at once. If so, take it at once, having regard to this main point. * * *

Understand me, my dear Heinrich. It is of supreme importance to me to be able to return soon. * * *

My sole object in this is *The Mastersingers*. I *must* finish it this year and if possible perform it early next year in Vienna. For this purpose, too, I need to be active and on the spot.—

And now, please do not misunderstand me if I beg you urgently to keep my arrangements with you a secret. You can initiate O. Bach, but on the same condition. But tell no other of my friends! I have quite definite reasons for this. Besides it will only turn out well if very few know of it. Cornelius is a terrible gossip and that leads at once to the matter being discussed in and out, which I do not wish. After all, no one will help us. My return to Vienna must be a *fait accompli* for everyone else; a joy to most of them, no doubt, which we intend to prepare for them.—* * * *

I can never tell all that I have gone through. The fact that, after it all, my one idea is the completion of *The Mastersingers*, is significant. But I feel that a puff of wind may upset everything. *Something* must go as I wish now or I shall go to pieces. * * * *

571. TO THE SAME

STUTTGART, 2nd May, 1864.

* * * * I wish * * to avoid a repetition of the circumstances under which my representative has left my letters unanswered, paid no regard to my wishes, failed to follow my dispositions, and quite obviously made it his one object to prevent my return to Vienna, and accordingly I have been obliged to decide to withdraw the power of attorney committed to Herr Dr. C. Liszt, and to transfer it to Herr Advocate August Bach, as soon as he is good enough to take on the business.—* * * *

Since a week ago, when news of the brutal, headless, heartless and utterly treacherous outrage perpetrated by my attorneys reached me as I was on the point of setting out for Penzing to meet my creditors on an honourable and reassuring basis, I have not slept a wink, and my hair has grown almost completely grey. This time I have been forced to take to heart the old precept, "Heaven save me from my friends—I can easily deal with my enemies!" * * * *

572. TO FRAU ELIZA WILLE, MARIAFELD

STUTTGART, 2nd May, 1864.

* * * Your wish not to see me¹ at Mariafeld again agrees with my own feelings in the matter. Let this be the end of a night of turmoil and fever, which even the fairest sunshine from without could not brighten, and let us draw a veil over the varied images it called up. My immediate destiny is still uncertain; but a doctor whom I have consulted recommends Cannes. I like the Eckert family, and an acquaintance I have struck up with a Baron Gall, Intendant of the Court Theatre here, may have not unimportant consequences. We know that the Christian virtue of Hope has usually been my undoing when I have abandoned myself to it! An operatic performance which I attended yesterday for the first time after a long absence has mortally depressed me.

My warmest greetings to your sister! May you and she both forgive me for the unspeakable uneasiness to which I condemned you, dear ladies!

I shall write to Wille informing him in friendly wise of my decision to give up Mariafeld. * * *

Farewell, dear noble friend! My warm sense of gratitude will never cool—never! * * *

¹ Dr. Wille refused on his return to have Wagner in his house. Cf. *My Life*, p. 885.

PART V
MUNICH AND TRIEBSCHEN
1864-1872

PART V
MUNICH AND TRIEBSCHEN

1864-1872

573. TO FRAU ELIZA WILLE, MARIAFELD

MUNICH, 4th May, 1864.

* * I must be the most thankless of mortals were I not to tell you at once of my boundless good fortune!

You know that the young King of Bavaria sought me out. I was taken to him to-day. He is so beautiful and intellectual, so spiritual and noble, that, alas, I fear lest his life be doomed to fade in this vulgar world like some fleeting dream of the gods. He loves me with the intensity and glow of first love; he knows and understands all about me like my own soul. He wants me to stay with him always, to work, to rest, to produce; he will give me all I need for that. I am to finish *The Nibelungs*, and he will get it produced just as I wish. I am to be my own absolute master, not a kapellmeister, nothing but myself and his friend. And he means all this seriously and literally, just as if we two, you and I, were talking together. I am to be relieved of every want. I am to have what I need; only I am to stay with him.

What do you say to that?—What do you say?—Is it not fabulous?—Can it be anything but a dream?—* * * My happiness is so great that I am quite overwhelmed by it. You can have no conception of the magic of his eyes. If only he lives! It is too rare a miracle! * * *

Do not let this go any farther! Not a word to the newspapers! All this is confidential and must remain so!—

574. TO HEINRICH PORGES, VIENNA

MUNICH, 5th May, 1864.

* * * * In accordance with my promise I can only hint to you of the impending change in my lot. If I had not taken the doubtless well-meant, but as the consequences prove unfortunate, advice of my friends to leave Penzing secretly, the young King of Bavaria's

envoy,¹ who was searching for me there, would have found me by the middle of last month; as it is, he has had to make extraordinary detours to discover me and lead me to the King. The King wishes to keep me here as his friend, and will at once do what he can to remove the worst evils of my present position. In the course of the year he proposes to do more. His first wish, however, is that our relations should be kept private and that no whisper of them should reach the public. I may take it, therefore, that you will observe the utmost discretion, even among our friends. * * * *

575. TO THE SAME

MUNICH, 6th May, 1864.

* * * Not a line from Standhartner has reached me as yet. I entertain no shadow of a doubt of his true and loyal friendship, and thank him most cordially for evidence that it continues unabated. Nevertheless, until this terrible crisis is satisfactorily past, I have made up my mind to apply to no one who is not able to answer my letters regularly or who does not feel called upon to take account of my wishes and views. The crushing misfortunes that a contrary course have brought upon me are such that I cannot but give way to certain human feelings which keep me for the present from any further direct communication with my old friends. * * *

576. TO FRANZ SCHOTT, MAINZ

MUNICH, 6th May, 1864.

* * Many things have happened to me. The young King of Bavaria has banished my hesitation about where to settle, as he has persuaded me to move permanently to Munich. In telling you this, may I add the urgent request that you will do your part to prevent discussion in the newspapers, as this is the express wish of the King? You shall hear further details later as occasion offers.

For the moment this much only—now that my place of abode is definitely settled, I can be all the more definite in my intentions of taking up and finishing *The Mastersingers* forthwith. I shall not leave Munich again, and propose to send you more MS. by the end of this month. Therefore, let us abide strictly by my most recent proposals. Please begin the printing *at once*. * * *

* * * *The Mastersingers must be performed* ² next January. * * *

¹ Pfistermeister, the King's private secretary.

² The first performance, however, was in 1868!



LUDWIG II. OF BAVARIA

*From a photograph taken at the time of his accession, 1864.
In the Stadtgeschichtliches Museum, Leipzig*

577. TO ANTON PUSINELLI, DRESDEN

MUNICH, 7th May, 1864.

* * * On the face of it, the storm originated in a mishap to a letter which I posted to Moscow¹ on February 2nd, and which, as now appears, did not arrive there till March 23rd, thus bringing to naught an important enterprise carefully initiated, which was to provide me with the means of subsistence for a year. I was so deeply shaken, not only by the immediate consequences of this accident and the practical embarrassment which it caused, but also by an intense inward realisation of my whole position, with its helpless dependence on such accidents, that—I admit it!—I lost my head for a time. I felt the old conflict break out in me again, raising the old question, Must I be condemned without hope of relief to live on such a repellent basis? With all the impetuosity of my excitable temperament, I came back upon the fundamental question of my social position, which, at various periods of my life, has oppressed me so acutely that I have sought means of making a radical and decisive change in it. I am very sorry to have involved you in uneasiness again on this occasion, for *this* time (amidst terrible sufferings I acknowledge) I have fought my fight to a finish and now feel the quiet yet deep conviction that it was the *last battle*, the last effort!

I see light ahead, kindly prospects open before me, and whatever happens, even before I set out again on my Russian journey (missed on this occasion by such an untoward accident), I shall contrive to indemnify you to the full and, moreover, get my poor wife regularly supplied with the necessary funds.

Kindest greetings to her! Tell her I think I shall be able to spend this summer for the benefit of my health and my work in the Bavarian highlands, as the guest of the young King of Bavaria, and tell her she may rest assured that she has in me a true and solicitous friend.

Well then, adieu, my dear Anton! Forgive these last horrid complications. They *were* the last and I shall never, never again be a burden to anyone. * * *

578. TO HEINRICH PORGES, VIENNA

MUNICH, 7th May, 1864.

* * I propose to arrive in Vienna next Tuesday morning about ten o'clock *. * * Of course I shall stay only a few days and I shall bring with me a *small* sum of money necessary to settle my most urgent affairs.—

¹ About arranging for concerts.

Please tell my friend Standhartner this. Give my regards to Cornelius and tell him it would be nice if he would go with me at once to Starnberg, where we could spend the summer very pleasantly.¹ At any rate, let him be prepared.—* * *

579. TO JOSEPH STANDHARTNER, VIENNA

VIENNA, 11th May, 1864.

* * I am well assured of your love and friendship for me and am happy to be able to return them in full, so that I should be for ever inconsolable, if a single day, hour or moment in which I failed to get the better of a morbid resentment should cause me to be guilty of an injustice towards you for which I could never make amends.

But I am in an excited frame of mind, after an interview with Rebel, the dealer, on the subject of the re-purchase of my furniture, etc., and, therefore, just *to-day*, I could not be sure that I should express myself with restraint.

So I exclude the possibility of giving offence by prevailing upon myself not to see you on this present visit to Vienna. Do not misunderstand me, my dear friend. My lot is now changing for the better, and all the evil consequences of the past will be utterly wiped out. I shall soon be able to forget all I have suffered.

We will then meet again, and it will be impossible for our conversation to express anything but the pleasant sensations of the moment, added to that remembrance of my friend's loyalty and sympathy which will be all that will remain to me of the past. Let us not cloud this certainty by any possible happenings of the moment!

Farewell! Take my warmest thanks for the dear fellow that you are, and for having made Vienna so precious to me that I shall find it hard to part from it.

Well, then! No misunderstandings, nothing but unclouded friendship. * * *

580. TO KARL KLINDWORTH, LONDON

STARNBERG IN BAVARIA, 16th May, 1864.

* * * If you could shortly come and make brief stays with me from time to time it would give me great pleasure. We should also delight the young King of Bavaria, who, because of Court mourning, cannot be present at public performances of music, by playing to him fragments of my new works on the pianoforte. * * * *

* * * I am to be forever with him, so that, free from every care,

¹ Cornelius did not accept this invitation till late in December 1864. See Nos. 584, 585, 593, 595.

I can compose, and produce what I have composed, *he* providing all the means.

I have promised, moreover, to complete *The Nibelungs*. He will see to it that the German nation is presented with a performance of my work just as I would wish it to be. * * *

581. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BERLIN

STARNBERG IN BAVARIA, 18th May, 1864.

* * * * I am not inviting you two to stay with me this year, as I have come to the point when I really shrink, not only from excitement but even from stimulation. Next year I hope I shall be able to lay before you a pleasant scheme for spending the summer together. * * * I must ask you, when you are able, to help me a little in giving my marvellous young King an idea of my *Nibelung* music. I have spoken of you to him already, and he is looking forward to this with pleasure.—

My relation with him is, indeed, my finest achievement; there is not a flaw, not the tiniest cloud, nothing but an enthusiastic disciple's pure and perfect devotion to the master. I have no other disciple who is so utterly *my own*. It is scarcely credible! You must hear, see, feel this glorious youngster for yourself: "Parzival." He is said to be resolute, strict and most zealous in the business of government. He stands alone, no one influences him and all recognise him as absolutely and veritably king.—

Dearest friend, a real miracle!—

And then—the leading of Fate! In the nature of things he might have been all this and I never discover it—his father need only have lived another ten to twenty years! Then suddenly, unexpectedly, he comes to the throne and a month after his father's death he sends to find me. Now the whole country is looking to see how I shall use my enormous influence over the young King! Fools! I am I, and he is he. He loves me as I am and he would not understand me for a moment if I were to try to be anything different.

All is so genuine, so pure here!—

But, indeed, I feel I love him as well as one can love a creature. I believe I should die at once were he to die.—* * * *

582. TO LUDWIG SCHNORR, DRESDEN

STARNBERG, 20th May, 1864.

* * Believe me—the ideal is fulfilled! Nothing more beautiful or more perfect is imaginable!—* * * *

I have no title, no office, no duties, I am nothing but Richard Wagner. The King agrees with me in scorn of the theatre, and more particularly of the opera. He knows as I do that only *extraordinary* achievements can influence even the former. It is quite within my power to do this from time to time. So we are first concentrating on as perfect a performance as possible of *Tristan*. The *time* for it depends principally on *you*. * * * The plans for performance which I drew up for *The Nibelungs* must serve as the norm for *Tristan* also.

Well, then, put yourself at my disposal for three months each year! Done!—* * *

583. TO FRAU ELIZA WILLE, MARIAFELD

STARNBERG IN BAVARIA, 26th May, 1864.

* * * Really I am only writing to prevent you from beginning to think I am ungrateful to you.

While I was with you I had to go through the dreadful birth-pangs of my happiness, and you were my midwife; we saw and felt nothing but the distress and anguish of that birth; and it may well be that for actual mothers, delivery is a life-and-death process in which all thought of what is to be born is wiped out and pain remains the only reality. And yet I scarcely know how I could have gone through it all and eventually, without visible hope, have taken leave of you, in a tolerably self-possessed and endurable frame of mind, if there had not been some sort of consciousness in the depths of my being that I had, by my unheard-of sufferings, at least *acquired a title to something greater*, a title, indeed, which, if not acknowledged by the world, yet raised me by so much the higher above the world and so made of me, even in the depths of wretchedness, an *inwardly hallowed and blessed man*.

You, my dear friend, can bear witness that I have a right to rate my sufferings so high. Think to what depths I was abased. Surely it could not have been worse? Truly things were as bad as they could be! But see, dear precious friend, this deepest humiliation has raised me up at last; I felt that if I could bear all this and yet remain gentle and kind it must mean that some higher destiny was reserved for me. It flashed across me like lightning that now the curtain must rise and some wonderful happiness be displayed. *It was the same with you*, you said so plainly. Confess that we were both as though God-inspired! And, my friend, this was what I *felt*—that I did not mind whether that curtain rose in life, or first in death; that it would rise I knew.—And so it happened that when

my wonderful good fortune came, I was not at all afraid; I was certain it would come, and was only startled that it should come with such express speed, now, yes, this very day and hour. The envoy [Pfistermeister] was actually with me when letters came from Vienna informing me of the disastrous turn things had taken there as the result of the ill-advised action of the friends I had empowered to act for me locally, so that I came to a swift decision to start for Vienna at once. My envoy accompanied me to Munich, where, having missed the connection, I had to spend the night, and early next morning I was prevented from pursuing my journey that day by an acute attack of illness. However, I pulled myself together sufficiently to visit the young King in the afternoon. At once all became clear and conclusive—the curtain had risen. A few days later I continued my journey to Vienna; what formerly could have been accomplished only by the most despairing effort and personal sacrifice was now easy to arrange. I returned with my servants and my faithful dog ¹ to my last new home where, upborne by the divinest love, I now enjoy the marvellous bliss which we brought to birth that feverish night at Mariafeld.

Do not doubt it, my dear. This happiness alone fully balances all the sorrows I have had to bear to the very extreme of misery. I felt that even if it never came I had yet been worthy, and it is this that makes me feel sure it will last. However, if you want further corroboration of the divine origin of *this* piece of good fortune, you shall hear it now. In the very year of the first performance of my *Tannhäuser* (the work with which I first set out on my new and thorny way), the year in which I felt impelled to such extreme productivity that I conceived *Lohengrin* and *The Mastersingers* simultaneously, a mother bore me my guardian angel!

At the very time when I was finishing my *Tristan* in Lucerne and was making incredible efforts to secure my return to Germany (till at last I turned in despair to Paris, there to wear myself out in enterprises repellent to my nature), a fifteen-year-old lad first saw my *Lohengrin* performed, and was thereby so deeply moved that thenceforward he based his self-education upon the study of my works and writings, telling his associates (as he tells *me* now) that *I* am really his only tutor and instructor. He follows my career and my troubles, my Paris calamities, my ruin in Germany, and nourishes but one wish, to gain power to prove the extent of his love. It was the boy's sole and devastating grief that he was at a loss to get his obtuse associates to take the necessary interest in me. Early in March *this* year—I know the very day—I realised the failure of

¹ Called "Pohl."

every attempt of mine to resolve the confusion of my affairs; open-eyed, helpless and despairing, I watched the approach of horrible degradation. Then—quite unexpectedly—the King of Bavaria dies and my compassionate guardian angel ascends the throne in despite of Fate. His first care, a month later, is to send for me; while I, with your merciful aid, am draining to its lowest dregs the cup of anguish, the envoy is already seeking me in my deserted home at Penzing; he was ordered to take to the King who loved me a pencil, a pen, belonging to me.—How and when he met me at last, you know.—My dear, no doubt is possible here. It was *that* and it is *that*!—Ah! at last a tie of love, bringing no sorrow nor torment with it! What it is to me to have this splendid lad before me! On my birthday he presented me with the beautiful oil-portrait for which he sat expressly for me. This wonderful picture has shown me how to give others evidence that I have “genius”; look there, there is my “genius” before your very eyes!—

An intimate friend of the King’s assures me that he believes the lad is thus grave and strict in affairs of Government in order to let no one gain undue influence, to preserve his independence and ensure his power to live for his love for me. He himself is perfectly aware who I am and what I need; I have not had to waste a word about my position. He feels that the royal prerogative ought to suffice to ward off all sordid cares from me, to leave me wholly free for my Muse, to procure the means for the production of my works, when and as I may wish. He spends most of his time here now in a small castle near to me; the carriage takes me there in ten minutes. He sends once or twice daily, and then I always hasten as to a sweetheart. It is most delightful intercourse. I have never known such lovely impetuosity in the impulse to seek instruction, such quiver and glow! And then his dear care for me, his enchanting purity of heart, his every expression as he assures me of his joy in possessing me; so we often sit together for hours lost in each other’s gaze. He makes no display of me—we care just for each other. If I wished, so they tell me, the whole Court would be open to me, but *he* would not understand me if I wanted to play an ambitious rôle there. It is all so beautiful and sincere. How easy it makes it for me to be at peace in every respect; no one notices me and I encroach on no one; all the things we both inwardly despise go quietly on their way; we do not bother ourselves. Gradually everyone will come to love me, and even now the young King’s immediate entourage are glad to discover and know that I am *what* I am, for everyone sees that my enormous influence on the mind of this prince can tend only to good and can do no one any

harm. So day by day everything within us and around us becomes better and more beautiful!—

This is my good fortune, my friend! Can you doubt that it is the right thing? The right thing, yes, it must be right; now you shall see how it lasts and how all prospers. Doubt not!—

[Written a few days later.]

* * * I am in complete solitude here; I still lack a little company in the house; perhaps I may get Cornelius¹ to come. Shall I be able to do without the “feminine” element? It is with so deep a sigh that I say No, that I must almost wish I could!—A glance at his dear picture helps me again! Ah, the dear lad! Indeed, he is everything to me—world, wife and child! * * *

584. TO HEINRICH PORGES, VIENNA

STARNBERG, 28th May, 1864.

* * Now let us be serious! My young King wants me to have everything I need. I need a secretary * *. He would have to be able to take my business correspondence off my hands, keep my MSS. in order, both the literary and the musical, make arrangements of my scores, etc.—in short, be an all-round fellow. Would you take it on? I believe, to put it on the lowest grounds, you might find it just as good or better than the dreary business of giving lessons. It would be only occasionally or periodically that you would be very busy with my affairs, and ordinarily you would have entirely free time sufficient for your own work, indeed, if you find talented pupils, for giving lessons. * * *—What has Vienna to offer you?

If you accept, you will make me very, very happy! The “secretary,” you know, is my pretext for having a friend about me. If you will unite your life with mine (how long will the latter last?), you will, I hope, *never* regret it.² And how great a thing, how pleasant and comforting a thing it will be for me to have an intelligent and friendly companion always beside me!—* * * *

Only—do not make me wait beyond the 1st of June. Here in my beautiful solitude, I crave exceedingly for someone of your stamp and—for I am like that—I suffer for the want of it.

I dare not say any more about Cornelius. He has not answered one of my letters, that is, what I call “answered.” (His charming birthday poem stands quite alone!) There is often something secret about him which is a mystery to me. God knows why he

¹ See No. 578, note, p. 196.

² Porges did not come to Munich till late in 1865, shortly before Wagner left it.

often gives me so much anxiety! ¹ I have accustomed myself to taking him as a gift from Fate's hand, like luck, good weather, and the like, but I see I cannot demand him from Fate. If he would come soon as well, how lovely that would be! For it is divine here at present, and it hurts me strangely to know what it is I am offering you while I see you, for your part, doubtful and hesitant, pursuing a wretched existence!—* * * *

585. TO PETER CORNELIUS, STAYING IN GENEVA

STARNBERG, 31st May, 1864.

* * * * I have told you again and again that I have carefully made all arrangements here for your reception. We two, and others as well, could live here side by side, quite independent of each other, each free to follow his work or his whim, and yet with the ever-present possibility of enjoying each other's society at any moment. Your piano, which would not disturb me, stands ready; there is a box full of cigars in your room, etc. This, my dear Peter, *is ardour*! It demands a response or—the wind will blow from another quarter! You have sent me not one line in answer to all mine, and yet you get H. Porges to tell me that you are sorry you cannot come, that you intend to revise your *Cid* during the next three months, and must therefore remain in Vienna.—

Now, which is better, dear Peter—that we should discuss this curious behaviour—or say nothing? I am almost inclined to think that it is better to say nothing, for—quite obviously—there is something behind all this which discussion is more likely to distort and blur than to straighten out.—Life after all is dominated by instinct and impulse. We are attracted or repelled apart from all fact or reason to the contrary. When I ask how these instincts and impulses have moved you in relation to me hitherto, the issue of inquiry is unfavourable to me. Two years ago this very day I was eagerly expecting you in Biebrich. For a long time I got no news at all, and then one day suddenly heard through a third person that you had been persuaded by Tausig to go to Geneva. You never knew how deeply that disturbed me,

That kind of thing must not occur this time, for we must be perfectly frank with each other as man to man.

I cannot accept as valid the reason you give for not wishing to trust to my provisions for your working in peace here. This time a year ago you left Vienna and went to Munich in order to work undisturbed. Moreover, *I* intend to work here and now. I can no

¹ See No. 578, note, p. 196.

more see how your *Cid* could disturb my *Mastersingers* than *vice versa*. On the contrary, I have been governed by care for you, and for your work as well as for my own. I was very desirous—I tell you so frankly—to be able to help you in the revision of your opera ¹ with my sincere and loyal advice. However, if you want to avoid *that*—well, that is a question of *will* and it is most certainly not a matter for discussion. * * * *

Whatever the circumstances, greater frankness with me is becoming. Your present behaviour is (in view of the warmth of my feelings) nothing short of wounding—and so I feel it already.

Therefore, my dear Peter, you must not * * take it amiss if I tell you of the irrevocable conclusion to which my conflicting feelings have brought me. Either you accept my invitation forthwith and thereby prepare to enter into what we might call a kind of domestic treaty to settle down with me for my life, or—you disdain me, and accordingly expressly renounce the wish to unite your lot with mine. In the latter case I, for my part, will also wholly and finally renounce all claim on you, and for the future cease to take you into account in any way in planning my life.—

Beyond this, it must depend on the degree of frankness you observe to me, whether we are ordained by Fate to have any further friendly intercourse ² at all. * * * *

586. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BERLIN

STARNBERG, 9th June, 1864.

* * * * I invite you to come and take up your quarters with me this summer for as long as you can, with wife,³ child and maid.—

This is the result of lengthy deliberations.

Hans, you will find me in clover—my life is completely metamorphosed! I am cared for by the truest love, the purest purpose.—

But—my house is desolate!—* * * *

587. TO FRAU ELIZA WILLE, MARIAFELD

STARNBERG IN BAVARIA, 30th June, 1864.

* * I am very tired, and am suffering from what I have been through. Now that the excitement has passed, the pain begins, as with wounds. It will not be so soon as you might think that I shall be at my art again. I am still amazed at the idea of what my state would have been now if this unexpected event had not befallen me, for everything which I thought I might hope for has, and would

¹ See No. 492, note, p. 127.

² See No. 578, note, p. 196.

³ See No. 583. "Shall I be able to do without the 'feminine' element?"

have, failed me disastrously! I think of that now and shudder.—My loneliness is terrible. I can only dwell with this young King as if on the highest mountain summit. My forlorn domestic life and the need for seeing myself to matters which I was never made for, cripple my spirits. I have just had to move again and set up house and worry over knives and forks, dishes and saucepans, bed-linen, etc. I, the glorifier of women! How kindly they reward me by leaving me their business to see to!—

Dearest friend, the most beautiful thing in your beautiful letter is the intimation of your visit! * * *

Yesterday Frau von Bülow arrived with two children and a nursemaid; her husband will follow. That cheers things a little, but I am so perverse that nothing makes the right impression on me any more. Perhaps it is only the bad weather that is to blame. * * * *

588. TO FRIEDRICH PORGES, VIENNA

STARNBERG, 29th July, 1864.

* * * * I cannot answer the letter your dear brother Heinrich last wrote me from Vienna. Think how greatly I need to *forget*, if I am to attain even a measure of tranquillity! Emotion persists only up to a certain point, beyond which insensibility sets in. I have proved the tenacity of my feelings by clinging to the things I thought worth preserving until my friends are weary of me. But I must not be expected to write at large to your brother on the difference between my dealings with Tausig and with Cornelius. The facts in themselves will make it clear to him.

My house is full of life now. Bülow, with his wife and children, has been here some time. I am to have the pleasure of keeping Bülow here altogether, as the young King wishes to attach him to me and to himself. I found no difficulty in making an arrangement so agreeable to all three. Klindworth is also with me. We play a great deal to the King. Early in October, to please the King, I shall myself probably produce a model performance of *The Flying Dutchman*. *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* are to follow—on the same lines—with Schnorr. *Tristan* next year. * * * *

589. TO LUDWIG SCHNORR, DRESDEN

STARNBERG, NEAR MUNICH, 29th August, 1864.

* * * * This resigned mood of mine is inevitable in view of my clear perception of the nature of things. My young King is always

trying to revive my courage. His will is enthusiastically set. He is saving money in all departments, abandoning building plans made by his father, etc., in order to have plenty to give effect to my artistic purposes. Assailed by his kindly importunacy, all I have to ask myself is where to get my artistic material? And here I am in doubt whether it is better to make everything dependent on those rare and exceptional talents who can only be induced to visit us at long intervals, or to aim at organising a more permanent and more amenable basis for my operas. This wonderful King, standing at my side with his extraordinarily resolute and inspired will for the ideal, like a "genius" incarnate, quite unfits me for forming a sober estimate of the possibilities.

The King has a great liking for you, and asks nothing better than to have you here permanently. As he is—at present—arranging for model performances of *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* (in addition to *Tristan*), and these can hardly be brought within a three months' compass, I feel that the only way to serve his zeal is for us to reconsider the possibility of your cancelling your Dresden contract (so unfortunate for me) and settling permanently at Munich. * * * *

590. TO FRAU ELIZA WILLE, MARIAFELD

STARNBERG, 9th September, 1864.

* * * —It really was not nice of you not to come to see me, and yet I know, of course, that for you home, husband and child come first, and so you are among the absolutely happy. * * *

Well, I am *not* among them. Just imagine what it is like for me—utter weariness of life wrestling in me with the conscious resolve now at last to employ my life aright. Only—curiously enough!—I am never happy about my resolutions! I notice that it is all mere affectation with nothing genuine behind it. And this is why a profound disbelief in my life often appears to me in alluringly soothing guise; like those brief moments when one is falling asleep, and enjoys true blessedness.—

Well, I have a young King who really dotes upon me—you can have no conception of it! I remember that in my early youth I dreamed that Shakespeare was alive and that I actually saw and spoke with him in the flesh; the impression made on me is unforgettable and I yearned to see Beethoven as well (he was then dead). Something of the kind must be the experience of this dear mortal in this case. He tells me he can still scarcely believe that he really has me!—No one can read his letters to me without amazement and delight. Liszt thinks his receptivity is reciprocal to my

productivity. It is a miracle! Believe it! And should not that make one glad? Indeed, it must—and yet, how hard, how hard it is for me to rejoice! Nothing less than this wonderful King would have sufficed me—else it were finished, utterly finished!

And I had *actually already been abandoned by all my old friends*—it was really *you only* who still believed in me.—

I have been quite alone again for some time, like living in some bewitched castle. I cannot deny that I find this utter solitude very bad for me now. Believe me, it is an evil which will bleed away my life. Unhappily, things were similarly bewitched before, when I had friends with me; there was no blessing or peace. Poor Bülow came at the beginning of July very run down, with overwrought and shattered nerves, and had cold, bad weather all the time. Consequently, his stay did not suit him and he fell victim to one illness after another. Added to that a tragic marriage—a young and quite extraordinarily gifted wife, the very image of Liszt, but intellectually superior to him.—

If only it were my nature to extract from things and circumstances my share of comfort upon the surface of life! Well, I am not like that; I am fool enough to take everything seriously. It was most important to snatch Bülow the artist from his insanely nerve-racking employment and find him a nobler field of work.

It was easy to persuade the young King—for whom, too, it was a very important matter—to appoint Bülow as his pianist. I hope to have the Bülows living permanently with me very shortly. I have impressed on both that there is only one hope of salvation for us all—community in creation of, and work for, the highest art.—That would give us a reason to endure and take hold—in despite of difficulties and life-weariness.—As you see, nothing goes smoothly for me! For instance, Lassalle's death! The poor man was actually with me (through Bülow's agency) a fortnight before his death, to persuade me to intervene with the King of Bavaria against his ambassador in Switzerland (Dönniges). (For I am simply regarded as an all-powerful favourite; recently I was appealed to by the orphans of a female poisoner!) What do you say to that? I did not know Lassalle at all; on this occasion he displeased me intensely; it was a love-story of sheer vanity and false pathos. I saw in him the type of the great men of the future—I can only call it the Germanic-Judaic.—

I have still no house in the town. I want something promising permanence, and can find nothing. I am to have something built for me, but that takes two years. Shall I really live so long? And yet I shall. My young King is saving up * * to get funds for the

production of *The Nibelungs*. I have not had one day of real rest as yet; I hesitate as to what I shall take up next. Probably I shall end by setting everything else aside and finishing *The Nibelungs*; if I tell the King that, I shall be still better off.—* * * *

591. TO BERTHA GOLDWAG, VIENNA ¹

STARNBERG [September 1864].

* * * * When last I saw you in Vienna in May you expressed a wish for further orders from me.

I feel I am still somewhat in your debt; furthermore, you know the type of garments I affect for use in the house, etc., while a good selection of materials (which in any case I would rather have chosen for me) is not to be had here. I shall be very pleased, then, if for the future you will see to my clothes according to my taste, only my wish is that, for these and all other expenses not calculable in advance, you should send me yearly accounts, to be paid by me at the year's end. Should you be inclined to fall in with my wishes, I have certain commissions for you at once, and you would oblige me if you could give me information about the following materials immediately. * * * *

Will you please, then, get me small samples of suitable patterns in these six colours and materials, and at the same time tell me whether you are able to entertain my proposal. I should be pleased, as it is the most convenient arrangement for me, and in this way I can give you constant employment.

You still, I hope, have notes of the measure and cut of the clothes I wear about the house? * * * *

592. TO HANS VON BÜLOW

STARNBERG, 30th September, 1864.

* * * * I, too, am anxious about Cosima's health. Everything about her is extraordinary, unusual. She needs freedom in the noblest sense of the word. She is at once childlike and profound—the laws of her being will lead her towards the sublime only. Moreover, no one but herself will ever help her! She belongs to a special world order which, through her, we must learn to understand. In future you will have more leisure and freedom to observe this, and find at her side your noble place. The thought of this is a comfort to me! * * * *

¹ *Briefe Richard Wagners an eine Putzmacherin* (Richard Wagner's Letters to a Milliner), published by D. Spitzer (Vienna, 1906).

593. TO PETER CORNELIUS, VIENNA

MUNICH, 7th October, 1864.

* * I am specially commissioned by His Majesty King Ludwig II. of Bavaria to invite you to come to Munich as soon as you are able, to pursue your art there, to execute the King's occasional orders and to help me, your friend, as a friend.

From the day of your arrival ¹ an annual salary of one thousand gulden will be assigned you from His Majesty's Exchequer. * * *

594. TO KARL KLINDWORTH, LONDON

MUNICH, 8th October, 1864.

* * * * I have undertaken to set to work to finish *The Nibelungs* at once and to produce it within three years. Everything is ready for a supreme effort. Shall I survive it? I do not think about that!—

My wonderful young King lifts me as if on clouds and I *must*!—* * * *

595. TO PETER CORNELIUS, VIENNA

MUNICH, 12th October, 1864.

* * * * Postpone your coming till December if you like, only if pedantry is at the bottom of this delay, you really ought to get the better of it; it is a mistake to be a pedant. Early in November I am giving *The Flying Dutchman* and a final performance of my fragments, to which Schnorr is coming. The King has invited Bülow to come to Munich in time for this; he would be very glad to see you here by that time. Nevertheless, as you like!—

Only do please write at once to the King * *. Write to him warmly, cordially, with the greatest freedom. In that way you will soon be on intimate terms with him. * * *—I was almost tempted recently to fall down and worship before him. Believe me, there is something "more than meets the eye" about him: he is not "of this world."—* * *

I should not have seen Liszt if he had not come to see Hans when he was ill here. It gave me great pleasure. Greetings to Tausig from him and from me. Liszt played me his ² *Viennese Nights* with real enthusiasm and praised them very highly. Having heard of that offer ³ of mine to conduct your *Cid* in Weimar he thanked me most fervently, making it quite a personal matter. One's only

¹ See Nos. 578 (note, p. 196) and 595.

² That is, Tausig's.

³ Was this offer made in earnest? Whether or no, it went no farther.

possible grudge against him is that we get so little of him. Well, there is "more than meets the eye" there, too! ¹

I am reopening my letter because, upon a second reading of yours, I see more plainly than before that you really wish to hear no more about the King's summons. Now, let me conjure you not to indulge in any crotchets in this matter. No one need hear a word of the salary the King is to pay you, if you prefer it so. It imposes neither title nor duties on you. It is a purely friendly service from my friend to my friend. Everything here is ideal, pure and noble! For God's sake, let us have no pedantic scruples. Be as free and noble as my King is—I ask no more! Reassure me about this,—please!

596. TO FRANZ SCHOTT, MAINZ

MUNICH, 5th November, 1864.

* * Anticipating the forwarding of proofs of the pianoforte arrangement of *The Valkyrie* for correction, I would like to give you certain information in advance as to how things are now with my work.

I have been induced to change my plan of work entirely. Sickness and lack of a settled abode, troubles which have only just recently been removed, have hitherto prevented me from working uninterruptedly. The King of Bavaria has now quite definitely commissioned me to finish the composition of my *Nibelung* series, so that in three years from now, that is in 1867, the first performances ² can be given under my own direction here in Munich. This commission is supported by every conceivable favourable circumstance, so much so, indeed, that I am now able to point out how you can get full satisfaction in respect of your claims on me:

(1) You already have *The Valkyrie*.

(2) You will receive *Siegfried*, of which two acts are complete, early enough next year for you to be able to publish the pianoforte arrangement the same year. ³

(3) You will get *The Twilight of the Gods* in the winter of 1866–1867, ⁴ so that the pianoforte arrangement can be published by Easter 1867.

You will then have published the whole work of *The Ring of*

¹ See No. 465, note 3.

² Wagner did not produce *The Ring of the Nibelungs* till 1876. (In 1869 *The Rhinegold* and, in 1870, *The Valkyrie* were given in Munich against his will.)

³ The pianoforte arrangement of *Siegfried* was not ready for the press till 1871.

⁴ The first part of the MS. of the pianoforte arrangement of *The Twilight of the Gods* was delivered to the printers in December 1873.

the *Nibelungs* with *The Rhinegold*. I do not ask for any further payments from you till the whole is finished, and will then simply rely on your forming a reasonable estimate of your money advances to me.

I hope my proposal may not be unwelcome to you.

All that I ask of you at present is that you will accelerate the publication of the pianoforte arrangement of *The Valkyrie*.

Would you kindly return as speedily as possible the score of *The Valkyrie* (which you cannot need at present), as I am in urgent need of it, both for work upon the orchestration of *Siegfried* and for a grand concert which I have promised to give before the King early in December. Your rights in this score for any purpose of publication which may seem good to you are **, as ever, undisputed. * * *

597. TO LUDWIG SCHNORR, DRESDEN

MUNICH, 15th December, 1864.

* * * * If I were to lose you, I should feel that the appearance of my young King upon the scene was the very irony of Fate! For—as regards intentions—he shows a beautiful idealism and an effectiveness in putting his faith into practice which is without parallel in the history of art. Let it suffice you to learn that yesterday I was told to write commissioning Semper to build the theatre I want in the finest materials ¹! * * * *

598. TO PETER CORNELIUS, VIENNA

MUNICH, 24th December, 1864.

* * * * I can well understand how hard it is for you to leave Vienna, for I myself, as you will remember, moved heaven and earth for a time to make my return there possible. But I am inconceivably astonished that you should be under the delusion that it was "Vienna," the "Imperial City," I clung to! You know better than anyone that I lost no time in trying to reconstruct the Vienna I parted from so unwillingly on the Lake of Starnberg. You know with what ardour ² I endeavoured to tempt you and Heinrich Porges to live there and to get Standhartner to visit me there. You must have seen, too, how coldly and indifferently I turned my back on Vienna after my short business visit last June,³ once I had

¹ The order had to be cancelled.

² See Nos. 578, 584, 585.

³ Wagner went to Vienna on 10 May for a preliminary settlement of his affairs and again on 12 June to conclude the business.

persuaded myself that I could not take *my* Vienna away with me—and yet can you confuse my emotions in this regard with those which seem to affect you at the moment in respect of the “Imperial City”? How strangely out of touch with me you are, after all! * * * *

Dear Peter, do this time take me very, very seriously! You in Vienna can have *no* idea of the possibilities here, not “in Munich,” but under the patronage of this ideal youth whom Fate has called to be King of Bavaria. *Everything* is possible—the highest, the most ideal! But—men are needed, true, ardent, purposeful men of high talent. *Alone I can do nothing!*—That expresses the whole situation!—When am I to see you?—* * *

599. TO FRANZ SCHOTT, MAINZ

MUNICH, 6th January, 1865.

* * * * While you delay in Mainz my *Siegfried* is progressing in Munich. * * *

I shall take up *The Mastersingers* again; you can rely upon that. A happy inspiration of that kind works itself out if one has reason to be in good spirits, and everything in my life makes in that direction now. * * *

600. TO LUDWIG SCHNORR, DRESDEN

MUNICH, 10th January, 1865.

* * * * We are to perform *Tristan* in the little Court Theatre before an audience * * * assembled solely by invitation. In any case, the performance will have nothing whatever to do with the ordinary theatrical performances here. Accordingly, we shall only borrow from the theatre the orchestra and singers for the lesser rôles. I count on Mitterwurzer for Kurwenal and Beck for Mark. As to Brangane, I am on the point of testing Fräulein Stehle's powers.—

I can no longer be bothered with “opera and operatic public.”¹ It is fortunate that I have acquired a royal friend who completely agrees with me. No doubt you, too, will be able to take your stand with me apart from this discreditable crowd of hangers-on of art. * * *

601. TO FRANZ SCHOTT, MAINZ

MUNICH, 11th February, 1865.

* * * * Here is a novelty for you, which will bring you luck, and on behalf of which I count on your good offices. I am sending

¹ See Nos. 544 and 608.

you a piece which, in the opinion of people who have heard ¹ it, will usurp the place of the *Tannhäuser March*. Let it be called *The March of the Young King of Bavaria*. What I send you to-day is the score as for a big military band. Any skilled band-master could adapt this for a smaller band. I am about to orchestrate it for an ordinary string orchestra, and will send you this arrangement in a week or a fortnight. Two-handed and four-handed pianoforte arrangements by H. von Bülow are enclosed. I count on its being performed at open-air and military concerts and later, by the very nature of the piece (which Madame your wife's mastery of the pianoforte will speedily interpret to you), on its attaining widespread popularity.—* * * *

602. TO FRAU ELIZA WILLE, MARIAFELD

MUNICH, 26th February, 1865.

* * Two words to show you how the land lies! You know my retort ² to my critics. Well, here it is again. It is disingenuous in one thing—in its presentation of the limitations of my relations with the King. Needing rest as I do, I only wish it were so. But if for peace and quiet's sake I renounce the privileges given me by the King's wonderfully deep, fatalistic affection for me, I still cannot see how I can reconcile it with my heart, with my conscience, to evade the duties it imposes upon me. You may guess that those who have been hounded on to attack me publicly are but tools; that is of no consequence and slander is already playing its last despairing card. But the motives? I shudder at the thought of withdrawing within the bounds required for the sake of my own repose while I leave *him*—to *his* entourage.—

I shrink to the depths of my soul and I ask my daemon, "Why this cup? Why must I find, in the very place where I sought peace and leisure to work, a responsibility forced upon me involving the welfare of a divinely gifted fellow-mortal—and perhaps of a whole nation?" How rescue my heart here? And how continue to be an artist? *He has not a man about him whom he needs!* It is this, *this*

¹ They were mistaken. This march, for which Wagner suggested the title of *Huldigungsmarsch* (March of Homage), in writing to the publishers on 16 March, has had little popularity.

² As a result of Wagner's privileged position, a violent agitation (see No. 611) had been set on foot against him since the end of January 1865, "a veritable storm-attack of furious slander," says Glasenapp. On 19 February the notorious lampoon *R. Wagner und die öffentliche Meinung* (Richard Wagner and Public Opinion) appeared in the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*. Wagner's answer, dated 20th, appeared in the same paper on 23 February (*Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. xii.). See also No. 604.

that is veritable anguish to me. The mere outward game of intrigue, played simply to break down my guard and lure me to some indiscretion, quickly recoils on itself, but what an output of energy, utterly and permanently destructive of my peace, I should need to snatch my young friend forever from his entourage! He remains loyal—touchingly beautiful in his bearing to me, and denies himself to everyone at present.—

What do you say to my fate!—My longing for the last repose is inexpressible. My heart cannot bear this confusion much longer!—* * *

603. TO FRANZ SCHOTT, MAINZ

MUNICH, 10th March, 1865.

* * * * Since my summons to Munich, I have been made to suffer intensely through wildly exaggerated rumours in all quarters as to my financial prosperity. True, I am at length in a position to live from now on free from material cares, yet I can only hope to make good former sacrifices and pledges, as profits slowly flow in from the theatres and other sources, and my inability to disabuse people of the idea that I can dip at will into the King of Bavaria's coffers, worries me to distraction. The consequence is that I am plagued on the one hand by the common embarrassment of too pressing demands; on the other by the popular opinion that the Treasury is at my disposal and that I am a drain upon the nation. The result will be that I shall grow sick of my life, decline my good fortune with thanks, and vanish from the world. Still, some way out may yet be found—at least, I hope so. It cannot be in your interest, for instance, to see me driven to extremities. Even from the point of view of your own advantage, my case invites your aid in once for all straightening my affairs, which form a perpetual storm-centre. For the present, and for some time to come, I cannot approach the King for money under any subterfuge without pouring oil upon the flames. On the other hand, I must stave off clamorous demands for the payment of debts. * * * *

604. TO AUGUST RÖCKEL, FRANKFORT-ON-MAIN

MUNICH, 17th March, 1865.

* * Your book [*Sachsens Erhebung und das Zuchthaus zu Waldheim*¹] is terrible!—

The very moderation, tranquillity and unshakable love of

¹ The Rising in Saxony and the Prison at Waldheim. (TRANS.)

humanity with which all is presented, make the book inflammatory in the extreme!

You are, indeed, a most remarkable man and God knows what you are destined to be and do. Faith like yours must be able to remove mountains; it is impossible it should be otherwise!

It would be an ill thing to dispute with you—neither should I dream of doing so.—

I have *devoured* your book!

My condition is much like yours in prison! How am I to escape? I want peace, tranquillity to fulfil the task which no other can fulfil for me. But—peace? Then a lad comes down to me from the heavens, a lad destined for me by the stars. He knows me, understands me—*by revelation*, in a way no other can. He values the destiny which has made him a king so young, simply because he can make me happy, fulfil my ideal—nothing else has meaning or purpose for him! Well, then! Now picture to yourself Bavaria—Munich—and need I say more? All I crave for is rest, because I can bear it no longer, and disgust overmasters everything else in me!

—What am I to do now?—All I want is to get away—to some fair corner of Italy—to live a stranger—as *Lazzaroni*—and heal my poor nerves. But how can I abandon to his horrible environment this young King, whose heart is so miraculously linked to mine? That is the state of affairs! What am I to do; what can I do?—I ask myself the question and know not the answer—neither can anyone else answer it for me. I am too weary!

But you—for you I have no fears. You have your vocation and you will fulfil it. You have the temper to survive even the *Frankfurter Stadtblatt*.¹—* * *

605. TO FRAU ELIZA WILLE, MARIAFELD

[MUNICH], 30th April, 1865.

* * A miracle! I have actually a quiet hour and mood, which I am using to write a dozen letters. * * * *

Yes, come! The three chief performances [of *Tristan*] are on May 15th, 18th and 22nd.² They will be wonderful, like *nothing* ever known before. It was for this I had to suffer—to see this! You can have no conception of the excellence of the two Schnorrers. They are concentrating all their powers upon this *one* achievement, to which they are now able to do full artistic honour.—* * * No hymn can sing the full divinity of my young King. It is all like a

¹ A newspaper. (TRANS.)

² These performances did not take place till 10, 13 and 19 June. Frau Wille did not accept the invitation, nor did the Wesendoncks. See No. 609.

dream, a fairy-tale; it is incredible that anything so beautiful, so profound, so exalted, could suddenly enter into human life. And how wise he is, without in the least knowing it! Yet much sorrow overshadows us; the terrible vulgarity of the entourage, of everything about us—and yet all governed by him so wisely, with infallible instinct.—God!—if *he* but thrives and prospers! Then at last the German nation will have for once the example it needs—something different from Frederick II.

All my fears are lightly dispelled by *his* inimitable rightness of feeling. Nothing harms him—he is hallowed.—* * *

606. TO ANTON PUSINELLI, DRESDEN

MUNICH, 6th May, 1865.

* * Impossible to leave you out now!—Dearest friend, if you can possibly manage to do so, come to my *Tristan*! It is to be performed on the 15th, 18th and 22nd May. If you come, spare my wife and do not tell her of it. Manage that somehow and—come! You will have an experience of which you can have no inkling. The performance will be simply *wonderful*. * * * *

607. TO THE MEMBERS OF THE MUNICH COURT CHOIR AND ORCHESTRA

MUNICH, 19th June, 1865.

* * It is not possible for me to take leave of you to-day after this third and, provisionally,¹ last performance of *Tristan*, without once again expressing my gratitude.

No artist, indeed, can ever have been animated by more inspiring emotions than have been mine in the course of my association with you. Not even the mother rejoicing over the child whom she has with pain brought into the world, can feel such rapturous gratification as was mine to the full when your exquisite performance gave to my ears the warm living tones of the score that had for so long lain dumb before me! An attempt on my part to praise your most significant, your incomparable achievement, would merely be an intrusion upon your own glorious consciousness of the same. * * *

* * * While I breathe, it will be one of the dearest concerns of my heart to prove my love for you and how filled I am with gratitude to you! * * *

608. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, ZURICH

MUNICH, 23rd July, 1865.

* * * * Even the ample advances you made me on the publication of the *Nibelung* works were swallowed up in an expenditure

¹ The fourth and last was held on 1 July.

which ceased to have any profitable relation to these works. As early as a year ago ¹ I was obliged to ask you to regard those advances as lost, as there was no possibility of recovering them by publication of the works themselves. I may think myself lucky not to see them published at all. For *The Valkyrie*, of which I am sending you a copy to-day, I can extract no more from my publisher than a very trifling deduction upon account of the advance he made me for *The Mastersingers*, a work which I am very far from having completed at present. Accordingly, though I now have to ask you to relinquish entirely your claims on my *Nibelung* works, I will not abandon the hope of being able some day to repay the advances themselves. This, of course, can only become possible through the generosity of my royal friends. But if I am to contemplate the repayment of even such friendly debts through him, I must necessarily await the favourable moment with patience and beg you to wait. * * * As to these works, however, which can never now bring me in the slightest profit from the public, they should and must belong to the King of Bavaria. I shall not allow even *Tristan and Isolde* ever to be performed elsewhere—and now, probably, never even in Munich itself.² *The Nibelungs* can only be given to the nation by the King as a festival gift. As far as the ordinary world of the stage goes, its likes and dislikes, its bargaining and refusals to bargain, it is all over. I am sure, dear friend, you will understand me well, and will not misconstrue my very reasonable request when I ask you with all my heart to let the man who has made possible the completion and production of my *Nibelungs* have sole possession of whatever part of the whole is my work. Please understand me and be kind to me when I ask you to yield with a good grace to the King of Bavaria the original score of *The Rhinegold*, which is in your possession. The King should, and shall, hear of your rights in this work; I am certain that he will not let them go undemnified.³ * * * *

609. TO FRAU ELIZA WILLE, MARIAFELD

MUNICH, 26th September, 1865.

Tell me, dear friend, how could you possibly have so overlooked me this summer? * * * So you have lived in and with me through

¹ This letter has not been published.

² See No. 609. The sudden death of the first *Tristan* (Schnorr), on 21 July, was a terrible blow to Wagner. See also No. 597.

³ Wesendonck, who had already surrendered the original score of *The Valkyrie* with a heavy heart, now parted also with *The Rhinegold* and received a personal letter of thanks from King Ludwig on 28 August.

the most terrible and wonderful periods of my life in closest confidence, felt with me, suffered with me, to abandon me suddenly and completely at an important climax!—How remarkable! What food for thought it gives one!—

Now, what shall I tell you about myself? I spoke of an "important" climax; I did not say a "happy" one. Perhaps you guessed that here, too, on this eminence, there was nothing but pain and suffering for me, and you were suffering too much to spare me your pity?—

There was a brief period in which I really thought I was dreaming, it was so wonderfully well with me. That was the time of the *Tristan* rehearsals.

Here, for the first time in my life, I and my art in all its completeness, lay, as it were, upon a pillow of love. It was to be so for once! All the studio arrangements were noble, ample, free and generous. Then came a marvellous, heaven-sent pair of artistes [the Schnorrs], entirely versed in their task, devoted, wonderfully gifted. My faithful guardian angel, hovering above me beautiful and beneficent, full of childlike delight in my content, my joy in the growing achievement, perpetually ordered matters to my use, and removed hindrances with an unseen hand. The work grew like a magical vision to unhoped-for reality; the first performance (without audience, only for ourselves), called a dress-rehearsal, was like a fulfilment of the impossible.

The sense of dreaming never left me. I wondered and wondered how this could come within the range of experience! That was the lovely climax and yet *embittered* by—*absences*!—Embittered, indeed! How petty you all seem to me for—avoiding this emotion!—

Ever since—nothing but sheer suffering. As I really take no heed to so-called "success," all subsequent experiments (for as such they count) before the public were simply troubling and humiliating to me. At the fourth performance—during the last act—I was seized with a feeling of the sacrilege of this unheard-of achievement and I cried, "This is the last performance of *Tristan*, and it must never be given again!" Now that is fulfilled. My glorious singer left us rejoicing, glad and happy in his pride and satisfaction. Eight days later I sped to Dresden to be present at his burial; "flying gout" is what they call the devilish thing that passed suddenly from his knee to his brain. There he lay—. Since then the world looks sad to me. I was lonely in the high hills, and now I am lonely here. I cannot see anyone and am supposed to be away. The King's wonderful love keeps me alive; he cares for me as never one man cared for another. I come to life in him and will still create

for him. For myself, I really live no longer. Yet he keeps everything away from me which reminds me of life and actuality; I can only still dream and create.

So it is and so it will continue to be. My passion for work absorbs all my thoughts. *The Nibelungs* shall be finished now. A *Parsifal* is already sketched out.¹ It is all marvellous, dreamlike; otherwise everything would be mortally painful. * * * *

610. TO JULIUS FRÖBEL, VIENNA ²

MUNICH, 28th November, 1865.

* * * * My proposal that you should be summoned was used by Pfistermeister to bring about, if possible, a breach between the King and myself. Returned from a holiday in Switzerland and finding awaiting him a letter from Ludwig I.³ full of rough reprimands, his answer was to invite me for a week's visit to Hohen Schwangau, during which the young monarch showed me so plainly that I was the one friend he loved, and in all respects opened his heart to me so unreservedly, that I could not fail to realise that I was becoming involved in duties, the fulfilment of which was ruinous to my peace as an artist. As touching you * * I found the King's behaviour liberal and fine, as in everything else. He was, however, apprehensive for the peace of Bavaria should he summon you, a man whose name, widely known, is identified with the idea of a German Parliament and the agitation therewith associated; and all the more so, that it is not to be supposed that you would have renounced overnight principles which you have faithfully pursued so long and under such various circumstances. Accordingly, you cannot be said to have been actually traduced to the King; only I realise from certain remarks of Lutz's that the present policy of the Bavarian Government is more than ever separatist, and that there is an obvious inclination to seek Bismarck's protection. They flatter the King with the idea of the need of establishing a purely Bavarian Bavaria. Well, time and experience will not take long to dispose of this, but it is very sure that the Bavarian Government, as at present constituted, is thus and not otherwise, and until an entire change of policy and consequently of personnel takes place, your summons would be the signal for disorders which would be highly unwelcome to us both. Although the conscientious young King tried to persuade me to give him a detailed account of your

¹ This rough draft of 1865 is to be found in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. ii.

² From Sebastian Röckl's *Ludwig II. und Richard Wagner*, vol. ii., p. 219. Munich, 1920.

³ See No. 611, par. 3.

development, of your tendencies and your views as touching the political significance of Bavaria and its relations with the German question for his guidance, I, myself, thought it better for the time being, and while things are as they are, to drop the question of your summons.

Recently, however, the attacks of the Liberal Party and of almost everyone upon Pfistermeister, on account of the removal of Neumayr and the shameless way in which the Secretary, driven into a corner, has tried to divert these attacks to myself and my relations with the King, have so brought the situation to a head that I am inclined to believe that a definite change is nearer than I thought. It is obvious to almost everyone that the removal of Pfistermeister and a modification of the powers hitherto possessed by the Cabinet would be of great service to the country. Pfistermeister has no political principles, and is guided solely by a mania for personal power, which he has established on an uncommonly broad basis during the last sixteen years by the barefaced bestowal of offices upon his minions. This was the matter which recently brought about the collision with Neumayr. * * *

How a reform is to be worked it is hard to say. I have not neglected to open the King's eyes, but I can go no farther. It is for him to find a way now that his eyes are open. I hope for the best, for I consider his talents in every respect extraordinary, nay miraculous. * * * *

6II. TO THE SAME¹

PENSION DU RIVAGE PRÈS VEVEY, 15th December, 1865.

ESTEEMED FRIEND!

* * * As regards my downfall, all I can hope is that my friends will for the present pass it over in silence as something unexplained and incomprehensible. I have imposed strict silence as a duty on myself, and to make this possible I go so far as to read no newspapers! I can say nothing that would not expose and discredit the King. All my hopes are set on his summoning up strength, so that faith in him need not be utterly abandoned—my hopes for *him*, for I love him.—

Still, I am not sorry, at this moment and for all eventualities, to lay before a scrupulous and judicious friend an account of the sequence of events as affecting myself in as pregnant a form as I can.—

I have recently become somewhat confused as to the actual motives of the agitation directed against me in February last.

¹ Röckl. See No. 610, note 2, p. 218.

I believe it was really a trial of strength, it having been realised that the King was not to be jockeyed out of his affection for me. Possibly it was felt that Pfistermeister must be abandoned. Thereupon they sent Herr von Gruben from Regensburg, together with an old acquaintance of mine, Klindworth, late privy councillor, political agent for Austria in Brussels, to visit me at my own house. They made me a most extraordinary offer of a share in a great financial undertaking of Prince Taxis's. I feigned denseness. The pair came again with Klindworth's daughter, who made use of a former friendship with Frau von Bülow. Old Klindworth openly offered me his services if I would get him Pfistermeister's place with the King. Again I refused to understand.—On the other side Pfistermeister glossed over the past as far as possible, brought the questions of Semper's theatre, the School of Art¹ and *Tristan and Isolde* upon the tapis with great ardour, offered me the prospect of unlimited credit, placed the purchase of my house on the civil list, etc., all the time, however (in the King's name, with whom nevertheless I was in constant correspondence), bringing up for discussion my latest views on Church and State. He wanted full particulars, using gross flattery. All in vain. I persisted in thinking of my artistic plans and of nothing else. I was not to be cajoled, it seemed. Well, they must wait their opportunity against me. Repeatedly (using among other things the delay in the execution of my new work) they tried to discourage the King and prejudice him against me as an impossible person. Financial embarrassments were artfully engineered so as to bring ignominy upon me. In this matter I was obliged to go openly to the King for help. They made use of this to get admissions about me through Frau von Bülow, a Catholic and Liszt's daughter. My answer was the proposal to summon you. This, as Lutz acknowledged to me, was received with horror by Cabinet and Ministers. A new and violent agitation was directed against the King; the old King Ludwig hurled his thunderbolts. Ultimately the young King's answer was his expedition to Switzerland, followed by my invitation to Hohenschwangau. For a week I was there, entertained like a near relation. I drove with him behind four horses with outriders, was accompanied by him thus two stations on my journey along the railway, took all my meals alone with him. Pfistermeister out of the way, Lutz took me in hand. A last attempt to conquer me; open acknowledgment of allegiance to Bismarck, a wholly reactionary policy, constitutional

¹ In 1865 Wagner published his "Report to His Majesty King Ludwig II. of Bavaria upon the question of instituting a German School of Music" (*Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. viii.).

rights reduced, and so forth. I persisted that I had no wish to meddle in any of these matters. I advised the King to appoint a third (new) secretary, solely to secure the acquiescence of the Cabinet in our new artistic schemes. Finding that we were both unacquainted with suitable persons, I gave the King merely general advice on this point, and he, to put it into execution, turned again to Pfistermeister. Immediately there was a violent uproar in the public press, pointing to my extravagance and my influence over the King, misleading him into all kinds of wild projects, as the reason for the whole constitutional agitation against the Ministry. Seeing that the decisive struggle was bound to come, I did not suppress a rejoinder in which my real position was made pretty plain and the Cabinet represented as despicable, etc. At the same time I urged the King in writing to do the one thing which could give him light and freedom, to send a trusted messenger immediately for Neumayr and command him to form a new Cabinet without delay. But their cunning had already succeeded in prejudicing the King in a personal sense against the discharged Minister. He declared that he took the suggestion to summon him as an insult to his royal honour.

That finished it for me, and I gave the King to understand that if I was to continue to create for him he must give me my discharge and allow me to leave Munich. This made it easy for him to evade the storm which awaited him on his return to Munich—in the interest of my safety, as he believed. Pfordten came down with an *aut—aut*—. Prince Karl talked of a revolution, even involving the army. The King lost his head. He sent asking me to travel for a few months till he could re-establish peace. I seized the opportunity to leave altogether, and am hoping now to settle down comfortably here and ultimately secure peace and quiet for work.

Thus far—as regards myself. If you can do anything in that direction, get the press to advise caution in judging occurrences in Munich and—to await the issue.

That the King will take courage, I know. He is suffering terribly already. He is a prisoner and has no one. * * * We have agreed to write to each other frequently. For the present I am silent * * *—Still, I fear greatly for the King—he is *too young* and the Liberals are *too stupid*. There you have the curse that gives the others their chance. * * *

612. TO HIS SISTER, LOUISA BROCKHAUS, DRESDEN

GENEVA, LES ARTICHAUTS, 3rd January, 1866.

* * *—I have had happy occasion to think of my family lately. Amidst all the turmoils of my strange existence in Munich, I spent

the evenings dictating my autobiography, which I have now brought down to my twenty-first year. Naturally you all come into it, and I have been very much moved by thoughts of my youth, which is remarkably vivid in my memory. Up to this period of my life I could write only in happy vein, even about my many errors, but after that date (and this is what lies before me next!) my life becomes a serious and bitter affair, and I fear my happy tone will desert me—I come to my marriage! Not a soul knows what I have suffered through that!—

Naturally what I dictate is not destined for the public. It is designed solely as a reliable source for those who, after my death, will be called on to give the world an account of my life.

Believe me, dear Fritz's death was a great grief to me. You know how much he always appealed to me, how fond I was of him! At the time, however, I was involved in such disturbing and distracting events that I could not have got a moment to send you my condolences except in a brief form unbecoming the occasion.

As a matter of fact I was daily contemplating departure from Munich. The King knew that it would be a kindness to me not to keep me any longer; since it was of use to him, he was even ready to get a momentary advantage for himself out of it. He will have to grow older and learn just a little more about human nature. His ardour gave me no rest. He struck at and injured all about him, without being able to make up his mind to effective resistance. What more can I say? Time teaches all. If he cannot find strength in himself to make a firm stand, I cannot impart it artificially. For the present I am holding out strongly for a few years of complete retirement for doing certain particular works. All schemes for foundations and production can, and must, be postponed. The King expects me back in Munich at Easter; I, however, prefer to live quite retired, whether here or elsewhere; my very salvation demands it.—* * *

613. TO ANTON PUSINELLI, DRESDEN

MARSEILLES, 26th January, 1866.

* * Your telegram with the sad news was re-telegraphed to me here from Geneva; even this could not have been done before yesterday evening, since I left Geneva last Monday, have been travelling from place to place, and only sent word there yesterday afternoon that I would expect letters and dispatches here for the present. This morning, after a wretched night, I can only describe my condition as one of complete stupefaction—I sit brooding

apathetically, groping vaguely for the ideas which should occupy my mind!

My measure is filled up and running over. A nature made for incessant artistic creation and artistic invention in an atmosphere of peace and quiet, lovingly safeguarded, finds itself at length so utterly abused, so falsely used under the dispensation life imposes, that in the end I am driven to smile in a way which the world may well take for a kind of madness! Enough! Let us consider what is the next thing to be done! * * *

* * * I may take it that your friendly care has shown those honours to my poor, my unhappy wife's body, which *I* would have shown her had she drawn her last breath blessedly beside the husband whom she had blessed. In the same spirit I beg you to provide for her resting-place.

At the wish of the deceased, last year I gave her full power to dispose as she might think fit of all matters in her possession, whether belonging to us both or more particularly to me. I take it, therefore, that she has made testamentary disposition of everything, and that I have no need to intervene further. * * *

614. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, MUNICH

GENEVA, 20th February, 1866.

* * * * On the other hand I am directing my attention more and more to Nuremberg.¹ Curiously enough I also have a long and enthusiastic letter about Nuremberg to-day from Frantz, suggesting that I should consider it. It is remarkably significant that this very genuine and unique "German" art centre, Protestant Nuremberg, should have come to the Bavarian Crown and consequently into the domain of my ardently Catholic royal friend. It is *there* that the future "German Academy" belongs, and so do all those other things which can never flourish in the superannuated un-German capital of our little Louis Quatorze. There is the place for the spirit of a united Germany to flourish. There, too, is the place for our school, around which there must ultimately grow up a general School of Art and Science, German and non-Jewish. I should like the King to give me a lodge of the castle of Bayreuth for my retreat—Nuremberg near by—all Germany about me.—

Only for heaven's sake don't let a word of this get abroad. Even the King would not understand it in the least as yet. To him—and for the matter of that, to the world as well—I must convey the idea empirically, and little by little. "Hans Sachs" belongs to

¹ Wagner wished to establish the School of Music in Nuremberg also.

Nuremberg—yes, then for the present not another word. The rest—will make itself understood.—* * * *

615. TO THE SAME

LUCERNE, 8th April, 1866.

* * *—I have just written to the King to tell him I remain here. * * * My income—more especially since the death of my wife—is sufficient to support a larger household with ease and with all necessary comforts, and so I invite¹ you very urgently and cordially to come with your wife, children and servants, share my house in the country with me, and be so kind as to make the best of my simple entertainment. If you grant my request, you will be contributing the greatest thing, nay the one thing necessary, to my welfare, to the welfare of my work—and of my future capacity to work. * * *

Hans, you will do as I wish, will you not? Yes, surely, for you know I love you and that—my bewildering, marvellous relationship to this young King apart—nothing, nothing binds me to life as do you and yours. You—know it!—* * * *

616. TO JULIUS FRÖBEL, VIENNA²

LUCERNE, 11th April, 1866.

* * * I cannot help seeing from your intimations that the non-delivery of the letter you entrusted to me for the King of Bavaria has been a service to you. A few weeks ago I was still pondering what should be done with it. The immaturity of the young Prince in matters political has become so clear to me, that for the present I have abandoned any attempt to guide myself by his judgment in this respect. Through the impudent dealings of the *real* political ruler of Bavaria, you will yourself have perceived how childish is the young man in these matters; but, nevertheless, I regard him as promising in the highest degree. I need not explain this further to you. The higher statcraft is for the present the domain of a very base bureaucracy. The imaginative lad fears this ugly piece of machinery, and his fear is just now expressed as a kind of timid respect. But let us wait. * * * My personal position has not been particularly pleasant. Very affecting proofs of the King's great love for me and his wish that I should contemplate no other permanent home than that I had begun to make in Munich shook my decision to turn my back on Munich altogether. The gentlemen in Munich appear to have been horrified by the expression

¹ Frau von Bülow came with the children in May, Hans von Bülow not till early in June.

² *An Freunde*, p. 458.

of the King's wishes in this respect. They trotted out Master Pfordten again, and made him renew his threat to the King to resign his portfolio on my return—an eventuality which "at the present acute crisis in affairs would undoubtedly bring the greatest misfortune upon Bavaria." I have now been fortunate enough to find * * a country-house here which suits me, and have rented it for a year. Therefore I shall be able to take up my work again with creative zest. The King, who learnt of the change recently, was utterly dismayed by the news and entreated me, with beautiful and really inspiring devotion, to go at once to one of his castles in Upper Bavaria, there to wait a few months until I could move back undisturbed into my house in Munich. It cost me a hard struggle with my feelings to abide by my decision, and so to inform the splendid young man. Still—it is settled now. However difficult and incalculable may be the development of this young and talented German Prince before he attains the full maturity destined for the salvation of the German people, my faith in him—but *only in him*—will continue unshakable. The key to that which moves him, makes out his course and predestines him for greatness, is not in the pocket of Herr von der Pfordten—of that I can assure you. But, believing as I do that I am infinitely nearer his heart than, for instance, even his precious Minister for Foreign Affairs, you will have no difficulty in seeing that in order to serve a high and exalted end (the attainment of which is the only object which might permissibly influence me to any kind of compromise), I am exceedingly unlikely to consider a compromise with Herr von der Pfordten. *Whom* this remarkable parvenu serves he may perhaps know himself—or perhaps he does not know—but *I* know and the knowledge is depressing.

* * * I find it a beautiful and encouraging sign that you are satisfied with the recognition of your spiritual efficacy. It gives me personal hope, too; for one thing grows ever clearer to me, namely that the ideal of my art stands and falls with the rebirth and the welfare of Germany. The former can only flourish in the latter! Let us work together, then, and let us hope earnestly that we may soon be able to join hands permanently on a worthy platform of common usefulness. * * * *

617. TO KARL, COUNT ENZENBERG, KARLSRUHE ¹

LUCERNE, 15th June, 1866.

* * Accept my warmest thanks for your noble opinion of me. I have long become convinced that my ideals of art stand or fall

¹ *An Freunde*, p. 462.

with Germany. Only the Germany that we love and will to exist, can help to actualise my ideals.

Dimly I begin to conceive that grave and simple German hymn which shall fire our wills to action. Not days of pondering, but the moment of enthusiasm, of need, of rapture, will give me my best inspiration. Days of uttermost peril are drawing nigh. May our Princes' eyes be opened; far more effectively than all their diplomatists the singer can give voice to their call upon their people.

Be assured, I shall remember your noble challenge!¹ Let us hope and strive! * * *

618. TO HEINRICH PORGES, MUNICH

LUCERNE, 2nd August, 1866.

* * * * The whole "Bülowium" is now with me, you know. He has indefinite leave of absence—for the present, the best form of waiting.—

Yesterday, Draeseke also came to stay for a few days. While my health is good I work on *The Mastersingers*, and that is a great joy to me. I hope soon to have finished the second act. Performance in Nuremberg next summer.² Be ready to receive commissions from me in the matter. You must accept an engagement for the whole period of the undertaking.—* * * *

619. TO FRANZ SCHOTT, MAINZ

LUCERNE, 16th August, 1866.

* * *The Mastersingers* nears completion. I hope to finish the composition of the second act this month. I shall not leave my present quarters till the third act and, consequently, the whole, is complete. I hope to bring off a model first performance in the spring. After that, my most popular work is to be available at once for performance at all theatres.

Directly after the full score, I want published an * * easy and serviceable³ pianoforte arrangement for singers and theatres, and I have just written to ask my friend Esser to do this. I count on Bülow for a really worthy model pianoforte arrangement, but for this he needs time, so that the arrangement cannot be published till later. Bülow places now at your disposal⁴ the (two-handed)

¹ The Count's challenge to Wagner to compose a German national anthem was not answered by the latter till 1871 when he wrote the *Kaisermarsch*, of which the closing hymn, however, never became popular.

² The Nuremberg idea was given up. See No. 625, note 1.

³ See No. 623.

⁴ See No. 621.

Overture and the "Gathering of the Mastersingers," from which you may judge the masterly character of this quite unique pianoforte work. * * * *

620. TO HEINRICH PORGES, MUNICH

LUCERNE, 1st September, 1866.

* * * * And now to future business!—True, my mind is still somewhat perplexed and not exactly eager for the venture, yet work on *The Mastersingers* goes forward, and if this winter my strange destiny allows me even some of the peace and quiet I long for, the completion of the score about the New Year is not an impossibility. Under such circumstances I shall regard it as a judgment of God *in favour* of the performance of the work next summer if I am successful *now* in securing a singer for the rôle of Hans Sachs for that date. At present I have only Beck¹ in view for the part. Months ago I asked Standhartner to confer with Beck on the subject, and, of course, I have got no answer! Now I come back on you, knowing you well as a punctilious and trustworthy man and friend. Well, then. Hunt up Beck (which, I may tell you, is not without difficulties, as the strange fellow, for some mysterious reason, will receive no one at his house). * * * If we get to an understanding with Beck it will serve to launch the undertaking, and I will see that you are installed for a year as intendant and artist-manager of the same. Your task would then be to go to Nuremberg to gather information as to the state of the theatre there and its resources * * and help me with the business side of the affair, so that next summer we can bring off a series of model performances of *The Mastersingers* in Nuremberg itself, though under the patronage of the King of Bavaria and with his support.² * * *

With these model performances I intend to link the bold idea of founding our German School of Art³ in Nuremberg. There and nowhere else is the right place to carry it out. If things go well—we shall meet there on a permanent basis of work in common.—

This quite between ourselves! Woe to you if a word of this project gets into the newspapers! The stake, the wheel and the gallows will be the mildest punishment!!

Dear children, for the moment the outlook is fairly wretched! Munich is impossible. I am now having my house there completely

¹ In 1868 Wagner was still set on him but Dingelstedt refused him leave. The first Hans Sachs was Franz Betz, of Berlin.

² See No. 618, note 2, p. 226.

³ See No. 611.

dismantled and sending for my servants to come here. The Bülow left me yesterday to do the same; he thinks of trying Basle for this winter. All my hopes are set on the completion and production of *The Mastersingers*. The result may be a great and happy turn of fortune. It *shall* be so. The King is loyal and good but—he has not the strength to be master of his people. Indeed, it cost me great pains to persuade him to give up the idea of my return. He had to consent in the end to give me peace. He is now enthusiastic about the Nuremberg plan.—* * * *

621. TO FRANZ SCHOTT, MAINZ

LUCERNE, 7th December, 1866.

* * My kindest thanks for your ready consent to acquiesce unreservedly in my wishes respecting the publication of *The Mastersingers*. I believe that you are also doing very right by your business interests, for the old-fashioned methods of publication are ill-adapted to my more recent works. It is just because I am prudent that I look round for new ways of showing my work to the public in the right light. And in this regard there is one point worth noticing—for very obvious reasons I have the genuine musical and journalistic fraternity against me. On the other hand, I have the genuine public for me, and, happily, the most important section, the theatre-going public. It must be our aim to promulgate *The Mastersingers* through the German theatres as quickly as possible. Consequently, the score first of all. * * * *

As Bülow's time is exceptionally taken up at present, he himself advised me to get Tausig to do a big complete pianoforte arrangement for really good pianists. Accordingly, the latter has declared himself ready to complete the work (already begun by him) with all diligence. The portions, as completed, are always to be sent promptly to me, to look over and then place them in your hands. * * * *

622. TO DR. MED. SCHANZENBACH, MUNICH ¹

LUCERNE, 17th January, 1867.

* * The assurances of earnest and urgent sympathy contained in your recent very flattering letter, induce me to write to you again, as I believe that your warm feeling for the King and his people, together with the favourable relation in which you are now placed with regard to a certain very influential Bavarian statesman, * * opens a way for me to relieve myself of a burden hitherto self-imposed by the silence I felt bound to maintain, since I could find

¹ *An Freunde*, p. 243.

no one (without approaching my exalted friend himself) to whom I could speak of the matters which oppressed me.

You will already have heard that, at my earnest representation, His Majesty has consented that I should not see him again until after the Chamber has risen from session—sometime about the end of March. Similarly, I do not intend to respond to my patron's recently much-increased desire that I should return to, and settle permanently upon, the plot of land still reserved for me (against my wishes) in Munich. I am now obliged to explain my reasons for this course in writing, since discussion of the matter by word of mouth, though more suitable, might embarrass Prince Hohenlohe. I shall endeavour to give such motives for my refusal to comply with the royal wishes that no least shadow may fall upon Prince Hohenlohe or darken the confidence which it is so necessary that the King should repose in his Prime Minister. * * * *

I hold a different view, however, of the task of the man who feels called upon to exert his will and all his faculties to help to restore to the Bavarian State the dignity which it has so shamefully lost. To such an one it must be obvious that the agitations directed eighteen months ago against my relations with the King of Bavaria concealed motives and facts which it is a duty not to ignore, nor to hush up, but on the contrary to bring to light and to the strictest requitals of justice. Or does the Prince von Hohenlohe believe that an invigorating and wholesome régime can be established in Bavaria if the shameless defamation and prostitution, which have for years done violence to the royal authority, the monarchical dignity, are not avenged in such wise that the King's Majesty is recognised as securely established, commanding respect, the sole and ultimate defence of the menaced Bavarian State?

There can be no doubt that this is not Prince von Hohenlohe's opinion. * * *

During my visit to Hohenschwangau in November 1865 the Secretary, Lutz, explained to me the policy of His Majesty's Government at that time (with the undisguised object of getting my co-operation). This policy was governed by the fact that while it was impossible to rely on Austria, and still less was it desired to stand for a German Parliament, an agreement was in train with Bismarck and the new Prussian policy, in pursuance of which it was proposed to restore the Bavarian constitution as it was in 1848. Since this involved a restoration of the absolute power of the Crown, I, so Herr Lutz supposed, as a particular friend of the King, would no doubt be glad to support the Government in being. My sole reply was that these revelations were entirely objectless, since I had

nothing whatever to do with politics, and more especially was ignorant of the interests of the Bavarian State; no doubt, however, I should think it desirable that, in time, at least enough power should be accorded to the King to enable him to raise the salaries of his poor Court musicians, of course only to a becoming amount. As I found very grave obstacles in this matter, I could only advise the King to look round for a special secretary to carry out his instructions in artistic matters. A Ministerial Secretary named Riedel, wholly unknown to me personally, came under consideration for this post. The wildest consternation now greeted my supposed interference with the structure of the Cabinet and revealed itself forthwith in the well-known *Volksboten* agitations, in the course of which, as you are aware, the King was audaciously held up to scorn and mockery. Against this really incredible impudence, unequalled as far as my knowledge goes in the history of any state, I perceived that there was nothing to be done but advise the King to reconstitute his staff of Cabinet secretaries entirely. As I knew no one whom I could propose to him for appointment, and as I saw that the young monarch was totally lacking in the necessary knowledge of persons, I ended by recommending him to make the attempt with Neumayr, the man whom these other gentlemen had succeeded in removing from the royal favour. Thereupon the King replied that this Neumayr had insulted him and that it was impossible to summon him. I said no more. You know what followed.

You also know of the agitation which supervened on the King's visit to Lucerne last May. Concerned simply for the welfare of my exalted friend, I advised him in the existing crisis to govern his conduct by the votes of the Bavarian Chamber then in session. I learned that the Chambers had allowed themselves to be persuaded to vote with acclaim for the "army of 150,000 men" pictured to them by Herr von der Pfordten, and I was forced to look on while the young monarch presented this man (whose Bismarckian tendencies had been revealed to me by Lutz eighteen months previously, and who in pure * * ¹ was now involving Bavaria in a war which was to cause the country losses in territory, in honour and sixty millions of money) with an effusive panegyric, simply because—he was betrayed and cheated on all hands! I was silent—but I suffered more than any Bavarian subject could suffer. Then—after the peace—the King informed me by telegram—by telegram!—that he had decided to abdicate—and come to me! To *this* point all those wretched people had brought the one German monarch in whom those who know him best had been constrained

¹ There is an omission here in the letter as presented for publication.

to rest their last hopes for Germany!!—I told him I would withdraw myself from him for ever if he carried out his decision. In my despair I gave him one counsel only—to confide at once in Prince von Hohenlohe, disclose the situation and take his advice upon this and upon the affairs of the nation.—

This advice did not suit the King. The master-device of those who had attempted to rule him hitherto had been to prejudice him, not against principles and ideas—they were too ignorant and conceited for that—but against *persons* whom they supposed might threaten their power. I insisted on nothing, declared that the Prince was unknown to me personally, and that I had only named him because he had been named to me—favourably. Still, I pointed out afresh that what the young monarch was in need of was above all an independent man, one who really had an opinion and a will, and that such a man, apart from the emergence of our intellectual and moral genius, might be sought with some prospect of success only in the ranks of the genuine aristocracy, amidst those of high personal power and standing. What was indispensable to Bavaria, fallen so low through the bureaucratic régime, was just such a statesman, one who, if forced to take the outside world into consideration, had at the same time some claim upon the consideration of the outside world. Hereupon the King was silent. I foresaw the increasing degradation of Bavaria's political status and of the royal dignity. The pain of it overmastered me. I could no longer bear to see the King's affection for me and for my art designated, whether maliciously or innocently, in the public opinion of all Europe as the cause of the weaknesses of his rule, and I told my friend I should be forced to leave him for ever, renounce all part in his favours, and disappear utterly, if he did not rouse himself to make decisions which would save his country. You know the result of this. Prince Hohenlohe stands there now and the welfare of Bavaria is laid in his hand. If the enemy, repulsed, now designate *me* as the cause of this reverse, I would ask Prince Hohenlohe whether *he* has reason to be ashamed of my influence on the King's mind, and whether it does not rather become him, the Prince, to acknowledge frankly that I have done a service to Bavaria.

Nevertheless, it is no part of my intention to ask for thanks, recognition, even public notice of my services. I am purposely living in the most absolute retirement to avoid being enticed in the slightest degree into making known my share in the turn things have taken in Bavaria. For the same reason I have only made this confession to you after becoming aware that you have, by conviction, a similar interest to mine in preventing the affair from becoming

public. Only you will probably understand that I am anxious to know that Prince von Hohenlohe has the facts. My object in wishing it is to strengthen his resistance to the discreditable machinations of the enemies of our most beloved King, and I believe that his strength for this purpose rests, not on anxious concealment of my relations with the King, but quite definitely on his power, in the right place and at the right time, to show the * * ¹ *how* the matter really stands. Most of all, however, I hope that the Prince will get peace for the King and re-establish the lost esteem for the Throne. I consider it an enduring insult to the King, however, that the discharged traitors still stand in high places with every sign and token of the royal favour, instead of being sent where they belong, branded with the marks which are their due. How, I ask, is the nation to form its judgment when, instead of penalties, the highest rewards follow crime?—when opinions encouraged by the traitors are nourished on the fact that the true circumstances are left unproclaimed or undebated?

I adduce an instance. The King has still not ventured to accord even the least of his Orders as a mark of consideration to a great and meritorious artist, a blameless man of honour, a true nobleman—Herr Hans von Bülow—whereas the highest Orders are distributed elsewhere with most disastrous prodigality * *. What are the people to say to this? Will they not believe that H. von Bülow is a notorious person—or, if they cannot reasonably believe this, what will they think of the King and his advisers?—

Enough, though! I have sufficiently unburdened my heart of what lay upon it. It is now for Prince Hohenlohe, as the noble and distinguished gentleman who at last occupies the seat of the late diplomatic place-hunters, to use his own judgment in extracting from my communications whatever advantage may seem good to him for the honour of the King and of this land. * * * *

623. TO FRANZ SCHOTT, MAINZ

LUCERNE, 22nd January, 1867.

* * *—On this occasion I may tell you that I quite agree with your view that the proposed shortened pianoforte arrangement (by Esser) [*The Mastersingers*] should be dropped. There remains, then, simply Tausig's full pianoforte arrangement, which will be an excellent piece of work of its kind. The subject is settled, then.—

May I this time, by way of exception, draw your attention to a circumstance exceedingly advantageous to the sale? The fact

¹ See previous note.

is that we shall be able to lay before the public a large number of brief, self-contained *morceaux détachées*, to which the peculiarities of this work lend themselves very invitingly. I have already marked down at least a dozen of them, comprising songs and little piano-forte pieces, and I place the whole collection before you.

Courage, then, and zeal! * * * *

624. TO DR. MED. SCHANZENBACH, MUNICH ¹

LUCERNE, 20th February, 1867.

* * Again I tender you my heartiest thanks for the bold excursion to Lucerne which gave me the honour and pleasure of your esteemed personal acquaintance. I also have to thank you for the kind letter in which some days ago you gave me news which, in substance, I found far from cheering.

You tell me in confidence of Prince H[ohenlohe]'s uneasiness at the constant intrigues in the King's entourage, which appear to increase rather than diminish the King's mistrust of his Prime Minister. This troubles me greatly, for I should think it an incalculable evil if the Prince were to lose patience to carry through his task, and the King were to be thereby deprived of his support. I feel thus, simply out of love for my exalted friend and care for his welfare.

But how am I to make you see that I am led by the motive I have alleged, and by no other interest whatever? That my quite definite verbal assurance has failed to convince you of this, I can see in your last very kindly-meant letter. Well, I feel that it is important to explain to you once more most emphatically *what* my attitude is in this matter.

I am unaware of any personal interest in furtherance of which I could need the mediation of any person in this world with the King, or with the State, of Bavaria. My strongest *personal* wish is to live unmolested and forgotten here for as many years as possible in absolute tranquillity, putting forth my works. The King's loyal affection fulfils this wish of mine spontaneously. The artistic plans instigated by me go beyond my personal interests, and can only be realised at the cost of immense personal exertions and sacrifices on my part. I leave them entirely to the King's ardent will, and I may add that that enthusiastic gentleman urges them forward more than I could wish for the sake of that peace which I am momentarily enjoying. All the schemes I formerly evolved have been adopted, and their execution assigned to the Civil List; neither the inter-

¹ *An Freunde*, p. 478.

vention of the Minister of Education nor of Herr von Gresser is in the least necessary. All that prevents their being put into action at the moment, is delay on Bülow's part in accepting the very honourable royal proposals, Bülow being ill and out of sorts, and cherishing, were it possible, a still greater aversion than my own to returning to Munich.

Moreover, nothing up to now has stood in the way of my own return (which I by no means contemplate as a permanent arrangement), except the dilemma in which the formerly indispensable minister, Von der Pfordten, placed the King by threatening to lay down his portfolio the moment I came back. * * * If you are interested as a good Bavarian in keeping Prince Hohenlohe at the helm of the ship of State, please try to persuade him * * to speak a frank and reassuring word about me to His Majesty himself. * * * *

625. TO FRANZ SCHOTT, MAINZ

LUCERNE, 25th June, 1867.

* * I note with regret that things are going very awkwardly. I have been unable to send you any instalments till to-day. I have escaped here from the ill-health and activities of all kinds which kept me from work in Munich, and I shall persevere now until *The Mastersingers* is complete.—* * *

October is decided on for the first performance.¹ As soon as you have the score ready you will, of course, send it to all the theatres. I do not wish to withhold it from any one of them.—I may say also for your comfort that the second act is somewhat less voluminous than the first, but, after all, it is a comic opera, containing numerous allegros and, consequently, many notes!—* * * *

626. TO JULIUS FRÖBEL, MUNICH ²

LUCERNE, 2nd September, 1867.

* * * I may explain my attitude to your paper briefly as follows: What I longed for was a political newspaper, of a soundness hitherto unknown, firstly for its own sake, secondly for the sake of the important influence which it would exercise, thirdly so that I might myself have a paper in which to discourse upon my artistic tendencies in a broad sense, without having to descend to a level upon which any serious-minded and decent person exposes himself to defeat. Accordingly, two years ago, I asked the King if he would summon you to set up such a paper. Now you have received the call from another quarter, and the King is ready to assist in estab-

¹ It did not take place till 21 June, 1868.

² Röckl, p. 40. See No. 610, note 2, p. 218.

lishing your paper for the specific purpose of advocating my views on art. This assistance would lead, practically speaking, to stipulations for the setting up of a separate editorship on the artistic side, and here our perplexities begin. You offer my artistic views the liberal allowance of a half-sheet daily. Who is to fill this space? I know no one from whom I would care to read so much printed matter daily upon the tendencies of my art, more especially if the high standard of the newspaper is to be maintained in full. I agreed to Porges's being summoned, because on general grounds I thought it the just and handsome thing to rescue this honest, diligent, good and sensitive young man from the constraint of his situation in Vienna. He wants to embark on the career of musical conducting, and consequently his future demands very particular attention. The very fact that I could only get him summoned in the first place to do journalistic work, is an admission of a strange condition of affairs. Should it turn out that your paper must needs have all the usual edifying journalistic makeweight features, which are the very life and soul of all our modern newspapers, we shall be obliged to look round for further help, and a second colleague, whom I could highly recommend, would be one Herr Richard Pohl,¹ now in Baden-Baden, a very adroit, very practised and withal a very devoted man. I should much prefer it if your paper, as far as my artistic views are concerned, contained no trace of the trivial and degrading Jewish touch so popular everywhere else, but on the contrary, on suitable occasions, good sound teaching were given on this matter. My idea, therefore, is that the King's contribution should be expended in organising the paper particularly on its political side on generous and genuinely independent lines, and not to prejudice the whole by too extensive, and consequently too shallow, plans for the artistic side. To a paper such as we may expect under your independent editorship, I will gladly contribute myself—and this will cost nothing but the printing. Porges can set himself more regularly and more thoroughly to elaborate the details of subjects which I have initiated. The shorter notices which will be necessary may well be supplied by the late correspondent of the *Bayerische Zeitung*,² Dr. Grandauer, who will pluck up courage now to adopt a firmer attitude. We shall in time find the right people to represent the other branches of æsthetics. * * * There you have my simple editorial programme, which consists mainly in the strengthening of the newspaper on the political side by the use of the Royal contribution. All good will come of this—for my artistic views as well!—

¹ Pohl did not work for the *Süddeutsche Presse*.

² This paper had just ceased publication.

You know, my worthy friend, from my memorial at the time, what consideration brought me to the establishment of a political newspaper. Everything stands or falls with—Germany. Accept my thanks for your most excellent programme. I am with you in it, body and soul. A thing which has become an affair of the heart with me through my love for this utterly wonderful young King will become in us two together an affair of pure humane patriotism. Your recognition of the incomparable importance of Bavaria, is a challenge to you, as to me, to expect great decisions from this last great homeland of the German race, so happily preserved, and to give it strength to make them by our encouraging calls. * * * It must be our chief aim to discover how this people, still so strong and sound, is to be rescued from the neglect brought upon it by the nurture of priests and bureaucrats. No doubt I have rightly understood * * that you look for salvation not simply—and indeed only momentarily—in the foreign politics of Bavaria. And no doubt we are at one when, in the face of every question as to our foreign politics, we say that our method of making Bavarian influence felt in Germany would be to make Bavaria the most envied land in Germany. You believe that everything at the moment favours just such an independent and model development of Bavaria, and that this development has an urgent impulse to move on ideal lines, with practical consequences closely analogous to the German renaissance after the Thirty Years' War, and it is right that by wise encouragement you should have been called to authenticate your belief. Well then, up with the standard! No compromises! Strict separation from all the base journalism of our day! Ah—if only you had found some other title than this "South German Press"!—* * *

627. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BASLE

TRIEBSCHEN, 10th September [1867], evening.

* * * * What do you mean by persisting in calling me "honoured Master"? How often have I thrown myself on your love! Do you mean to say now that the friend sacrificed himself for the "Master"? True, perhaps it is only as the "Master" that I have any claim on the friend's sacrifices. Shall I go on creating, or have I finished with that? That is the decision which looms before me. I, too, have already made great sacrifices, believe me, the highest sacrifice of friendship, in order to continue to create. Now it is preordained irrevocably—that may still be possible, but only by the sacrifice of the friend. Do you believe in friendship?—Love of the "Master"!—* * *

628. TO THE SAME

LUCERNE, 30th September, 1867.

* * I have just studied *Nirvana*¹ again.—You most extraordinary person! How hard it will be for you to *be* somebody! And yet an inner voice tells me plainly how near you are to my heart and how I depend on you. If only you could understand your destiny! If you were to succumb under it, it would be because your heart and soul are set upon too radiant a model. In this revised work of your youth, I perceive unmistakably this overweeningness of the spirit. From no point of view could I pretend to disregard this piece. Such work done in youth marks you out for the very highest conceivable mastery of your art. Such originality, such diabolic clarity of expression are here, that it fills one with horror to be obliged to realise that it *is* a youthful work. There is too much in it, and that is a danger. And see, Hans, it is just the same with your heart. Fate has endowed it with a greatness, a beauty, only equalled by the grand scale on which your spirit as an artist has been planned. Do not sink down under the immensity of the tasks assigned you. Acknowledge them, recognise them in the eyes of your friend, look them courageously and proudly in the face, and if you shoulder them you become an example of rare nobility.—So that's settled, my dear Hans! All that is wanted now is care and wise cultivation. Your success can, and will, only come from within you. You have nothing to do but answer to your vocation, and this is an incomparably high and splendid one!—* * *

629. TO FRANZ SCHOTT, MAINZ

LUCERNE, 6th November, 1867.

* * * I am sorry that the score gives the compositor so much trouble—only it means that the piece will “go” all the more merrily! A comic opera has a longer libretto and consequently more notes than a tragic one, for the tempi are almost double the speed throughout. That can't be helped.—* * * I am now engaged on rearranging the libretto to make it sell better in the theatres. I have altered it a little. * * *

* * * For my part, my most esteemed friend, you shall learn as time goes on that I am ever mindful of the friendly services you have done me, even though I cannot but regret that your hesitation at a critical period caused great delay in our enterprises. Had you supported me ten or twelve months longer in the Biebrich days—our *Mastersingers* would have been on the boards three years by

¹ See No. 269, note, vol. i, p. 272.

now. God knows it was unfortunate that you took the wrong step then. Well, that is remedied now, and *I am counting now on having before me the most productive years of my whole artistic career!*—* * *

630. TO LORENZ VON DÜFFLIPP, MUNICH¹

MUNICH, 5th February, 1868.

As I can do little good by my presence in Munich during the period of the preliminary study of *The Mastersingers*, I propose to return to the tranquillity of my Lucerne retreat at the end of the week. * * *² I hope to be quiet there and resume work on the score of *Siegfried*, and so ensure its completion within the year.

As regards the future performance of this work, which my exalted Patron has followed with such keen interest, my attention has been caught by the news that Herr von Perfall has expressed a wish that the Royal approval should be applied for for the reconstruction of the stage of the Royal Court Theatre—a piece of work long recognised as necessary and to be put in hand during the coming summer. Not only is this reconstruction needed to put the Munich Court Theatre on a level with other German theatres of the better type, but it should, as Herr von Perfall hopefully gave me to understand, also put the stage of the Court Theatre in a condition which would answer fairly well for the scenic problems set in my *Nibelung* dramas. As a consequence it might not be impossible, should His Majesty wish it, for the separate parts of the cycle to be experimentally performed, following each other year by year. For example, a beginning might be made next year with *The Rhinegold*, followed the year after by *The Valkyrie*,³ and the whole work thus successively produced. * * *

631. TO FRANZ SCHOTT, MAINZ

LUCERNE, 24th April, 1868.

* * All in good time! I absolutely must wait till Nachbaur comes from Darmstadt for his Munich engagement before I can allow my *Mastersingers* to be produced. * * * *

* * * I have promised the King to finish *Siegfried* by the end of this year. *The Twilight of the Gods*, the last piece of the *Nibelung* cycle, must then shortly follow. After that something new—as a contrast to *The Mastersingers* perhaps—namely a *Parzival*—in the *Lohengrin* genre. Good luck to all our plans. * * *

¹ *Zeitschrift für Musik*, Leipzig, 1924.

² Omission in the original as presented for publication.

³ This was done after the rebuilding, but *Siegfried* and *The Twilight of the Gods* were first performed in Bayreuth in 1876.

632. TO THE SAME

LUCERNE, 23rd July, 1868.

* * * * As regards Dresden, I have relaxed my condition and have made up my mind not to insist anywhere upon an uncut performance of *The Mastersingers*, for reasons, indeed, unflattering to the theatres, but also to spare myself the personal exertions which insistence would impose on me and which I am anxious to avoid. This anxiety is off our minds. I shall still see that a good accurate performance is given in Berlin ¹ and, for the rest, bother no more about it.—* * * *

633. TO HIS SISTER, CLARA WOLFRAM, CHEMNITZ

LUCERNE, 20th October, 1868.

* * * * It is really not quite without significance that these *Mastersingers* arrive on the fortieth anniversary of your wedding day. Take from them the spirit of peaceful, smiling resignation. It is this spirit which has inspired the work, and what can besem us better as we look back on lives full of care and trouble with so few of our wishes fulfilled? That we have borne it all and ultimately given up everything that could be called a hope, shows, does it not, that through it all there was only one real good to be attained—tranquillity of the spirit in renunciation! And truly, one great joy, the only unclouded joy, may be derived therefrom—quiet, disinterested delight in what is good and beautiful. This it was that I had power to offer you when I got you to come to Munich, for I had something to contribute to that kind of enjoyment. Now I send you the work, so that you can live it over again. Turn the pages often, and when your golden wedding day dawns, open it again and perhaps it will sound in your mind's ear of itself——* * *

634. TO HIS SISTER, OTTILIE BROCKHAUS,² LEIPZIGTRIEBSCHEN (LUCERNE), 6th December, 1868.

* * * * I recently came upon an extract from Laube's now somewhat widely-known critique ³ of my *Mastersingers* and allied matters. It was indeed very painful reading, and it distressed me very greatly to think that this really vicious person could still be received in my sister's house with a certain assumption, for social

¹ This did not take place.

² His sister Ottilie had visited him early in November.

³ First published in the Viennese *Neue Freie Presse*, afterwards frequently reprinted, as for example in the *Tonhalle*. Cf. Wagner's three satirical sonnets "To Heinrich Laube" (*Gedichte* [Poems], published by Glasenapp, Berlin, 1905).

purposes, of impartiality as regards her brother's case. Well, it is repugnant to me to challenge you at all upon this point, and yet [I] could wish that should he, with that remarkable unconstraint of his, speak of this matter in your house, you would impose absolute silence on him with regard to myself, yes, even forbid him to mention my name. If you should need some means to enforce this, ask him whether he would like it if I were to make public the letter he wrote this year to myself and Frau von Bülow, as also the messages addressed to the latter through Charlotte von Hagen, soliciting the post of Intendant of the theatre at Munich, and accompanied by assurances of his zeal for my works and the trend of my artistic views. It is true he might accept the challenge, for he knows very well that, even with his consent, I am incapable of that kind of baseness. It is just that which gives confidence to many of those who attack me. * * * *

635. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BASLE

LUCERNE, 27th December, 1868.

* * * I propose to reissue "Judaism in Music" in the form of a letter to Madame Moukhanoff (Kalergis), who asked with astonishment what was at the bottom of the unrelenting hostility of the press, etc., towards me in particular. This astonishment, which I have also detected as an undercurrent at times in many an innocent reporter when writing about me, shall exist no longer. My first answer shall be a reprint¹ of my eighteen-year-old article, only somewhat repolished as to style.—* * * *

636. TO THE SAME

LUCERNE, 18th March, 1869.

* * * I have taken Edward Devrient in hand, but have adopted the pseudonym of "Wilhelm Drach" for the purpose, because in dealing with this man under my own name I should naturally have been obliged to involve myself more deeply than the affair is worth. Unfortunately, I have had to resort to pamphlet form² again, as no great newspaper is open to me. Recently, however, the *Nord-deutsche Allgemeine* has opened its pages to me (through J. Lang). "Edward Devrient and His Style" will shortly appear therein.³ I can promise you a great deal of amusement out of it.—* * * *

¹ Cf. *Aufklärungen über das Judentum in der Musik*, printed by J. J. Weber, Leipzig, 1869 (*Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. viii.).

² Published by C. Fritsch, Munich, and shortly afterwards under Wagner's name by Georg Stilke, Berlin (*Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. viii.).

³ Issues of 26 and 28 March. Part of the pamphlet.

637. TO HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW, EDWARD AVENARIUS, BERLIN

TRIEBSCHEN, 12th October, 1869.

*** I have already told you of my proposal to publish my "Collected Writings."¹ The fact that I cannot prevent people meddling with me in the most ignorant and careless fashion and that the confusion about me grows even worse confounded, is a constant warning to me to see that genuine knowledge, a true perspective of my deeds and works, is secured for this and for a later age. The enclosed paper² will give you the plan of the edition. You will see that the whole is diverse enough and yet connected. The material for the first volume is absolutely ready, and so is almost all the remainder. The next thing is to find the right publisher. I told you all about my tiresome experiences hitherto with J. J. Weber's, and I should be very troubled if I had to go on in this way (as it were purely by the mercy of God). It vexes me to be no more than a make-weight in such an appallingly huge concern. My ideal would be a young beginner,³ who would be at some pains to make a name for his firm as quickly as possible—someone who would "throw himself into the job." Please consider what and whom you could propose for my purpose. As to whether the edition should appear quickly, or slowly, circumstances must decide. The volumes need not appear in their ultimate serial order. For instance, Volume IV. ("Opera and Drama") could be kept back till the end. The "Three Operatic Poems," "The Work of Art of the Future" and "Art and Revolution" are right out of print and I get many complaints about it, particularly from foreigners. There should be a good market in France, England and Russia. Volume I. could be begun at once. It makes entertaining and cheerful reading. (God! when I think how Mendelssohn's quite worthless and empty letters sell!) Well, I ought not to have much trouble about it, and the business should prove somewhat profitable.—***

638. TO FRANZ SCHOTT, MAINZ

LUCERNE, 22nd October, 1869.

*** I consider, and you will probably agree, that it is too soon as yet to enter into the question of the publication of the *Nibelung* scores with you. Still, I would gladly receive your views on the matter as occasion offers. I am already engaged on the rough draft of the last work of the cycle, *The Twilight of the Gods*. Curiously

¹ *Gesammelte Schriften*. (TRANS.)

² This has not been presented for publication.

³ He found what he wanted in E. W. Fritzsch (Leipzig), but the first volume was not published till 1871. See No. 641 (end).

enough, the annoyance¹ to which I was subjected in Munich about this business has not been able to efface the impression made on me by the discovery that even what I know to be a nonsensical, and what was, admittedly, a very spiritless and dull presentation of this most difficult member of the cycle—*The Rhinegold*—not only failed to ruin the work, but, on the contrary, actually confirmed its appeal to the public, so that, as I have said, a number of theatres are already thinking of taking it up.—Well, it will all be very different another time!—* * *

639. TO THE SAME

LUCERNE, 4th December, 1869.

* * * * A complete edition of my operatic scores is a matter which increasingly occupies my attention. Many opportunities have been let slip in this business already. I recently heard from the unfortunate present manager of the firm of C. F. Meser, of Dresden, that increasingly frequent orders for the scores of *Rienzi* and *The Flying Dutchman* were a constant source of embarrassment to him, and made him regret not having had more of them printed in time. On the other hand, the printing of the *Tannhäuser* score has been unfortunate, Herr H. Müller having previously had it done before I had worked out anew certain scenes (for Paris). Since then he behaved so inconsiderately towards me that I have not yet permitted him to complete the score with these new scenes, and, consequently, have not yet told him of them. If this score, in particular, were to be completed according to my revised version, I would take steps to force the theatres to procure this edition. Well, all this is in the air for the present, because I should like to save it up for a complete collected edition. Still, it would interest me, should you care to try to make something of it, to know how you would have to arrange with Messrs. H. Müller (Meser) and Breitkopf and Härtel about the taking over of their rights in publication. For instance, I should like to begin to re-edit *The Flying Dutchman* with improvements, and then devote my remaining years of life to a gradual revision, at my convenience, of the other publications, concluding with *The Nibelungs*. I believe it would make it easiest for you if it were to be made a subscribed edition, as the King of Bavaria² would then have to his hand a method of supporting the enterprise; he would put his name down for as many copies as you think necessary roughly to cover the cost.—* * *

¹ See the Editor's article, *Der Zwist zwischen König Ludwig II. und Wagner wegen Aufführung des "Rheingolds,"* in the *Allgemeine Musikzeitung*, 1924, p. 523.

² See No. 642.

640. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, ZURICH

TRIEBSCHEN, 1 *January*, 1870.

* * * * For some four years, through days of indescribable stress, it has given me comfort and support to dictate¹ the story of my life in full, in the form in which I shall some day make it over to one who—sooner or later after my death—will compile my true biography. The magnitude and offensiveness of current distortions of my life may, however, determine me to place earlier in the hands of some chosen person material dictated by me, to correct certain points. In order to safeguard this manuscript from destruction, I recently had the idea of having, say half a dozen copies, set up in print at my expense. Accordingly, I send you herewith a first batch of proofs just received, with the earnest request that you will not consider it as a presumptuous claim on your interest.

I shall not forget to acknowledge any further good which may come to my life and work through you. I cannot but wish that I may attain a ripe age, since my duties in life have increased immeasurably, and now at last my painful experiences are to be recompensed with that rest and quiet which I hope may bring me to the completion of all the works in which I have been most sorely hindered throughout my past life—with the sole exception of the time spent in your neighbourhood and in the shelter of your friendship.

*The Twilight of the Gods*² is begun; after a certain amount of rest and thought *Parsifal* is to follow, while there is many another conception within me which promises well for future creativeness.—* * * *

641. TO HIS SISTER, CECILIE AVENARIUS, BERLIN

[TRIEBSCHEN, 14th *January*, 1870.]

* * I still owe you my very deepest thanks for a Christmas present of incomparable value. It is only during these last few days that I have attained what I considered the right frame of mind in which to read the letters [Geyer's]. You will understand me, knowing as you do how desirous I am of collecting the family records and preventing them from going astray. All our relations are aware of this increasing propensity which was aroused in me some years ago, and have been surprised that these records have been inquired after so zealously. I am, accordingly, very grateful to you for having taken such great personal pains to copy these moving documents, the originals of which, as you suppose, will be

¹ See Prof. W. Altmann's Introduction to *Mein Leben*.² *Götterdämmerung*. (TRANS.)

of great value to your children, even though they have no personal recollection of the man whose handwriting so touches us, because it calls up for us the very person with whom we were once in such intimate contact.

The contents of these letters have not only touched me; they have really shaken me to the soul. So perfect an example of utter self-sacrifice for a nobly conceived end is seldom set so clearly before our eyes in everyday life. I can tell you that I feel almost inconsolable over this self-immolation of our father Geyer's, and that, in particular, his letters to Albert fill me with real bitterness. I am specially affected, too, by the tender, delicate and refined tone of these letters, particularly those to our mother. I cannot understand how this note of true culture could have deteriorated so greatly in the later social intercourse of our family. At the same time, however, these letters to mother afforded me deep insight into the relationship of the two in difficult times. I believe now that I see it all clearly, although it would be extremely difficult for me to express my views of this relationship. It seems to me as if our father Geyer believed he was making atonement for a sin¹ by his self-immolation for the whole family.—

I received a printed copy of *The Massacre of the Innocents*² at the same time. So, as the written copy, provided no doubt at the cost of much labour, by your sisterly care, though not valuable as an autograph copy, has a certain value due to the unusual circumstances, let me beg you to allow me to send it back to you.—

I really owe Edward an answer to his very kind and circumstantial letter on the subject of the publication³ of my "Collected Writings," but what I have to tell him is deuced little, namely, that I see that the time to fulfil my wish is not yet. I realised this as the *summa summarum* of the proposals he made to me. Please be so kind as to give my very kindest greetings to your good husband, and to tell him of this simple realisation on my part. * * * *

642. TO FRANZ SCHOTT, MAINZ

LUCERNE, 19th June, 1870.

* * * * Meanwhile, I am diligently composing *The Twilight of the Gods*, of which I have just completed the overture and first act.

As to the publication of my scores,⁴ the autumn will have to serve for making arrangements about it, as now, when I am bound to declare my very decided opposition to the nonsensical performance of *The Valkyrie* in Munich, I should prefer not to correspond with

¹ Cf. *Mein Leben*, p. 1008, note 12 (Prof. Altmann's edition).

² By Ludwig Geyer.

³ See No. 637.

⁴ See No. 638.

the King¹ on matters touching my works.—Even then, our first concern must, of course, be for the publication of the scores of *The Ring of the Nibelungs*. I do not think I can hold out, on grounds of cheapness, for your publishing this work at your own sole risk as publishers, since I cannot possibly consider delivering these works to the theatres in the ordinary way as “operas.” Long since I reached an agreement with you (for the same reasons, and in respect of the pianoforte arrangements also) not to make further demands upon you. Yet, nevertheless, I believe you, for your part, might, notwithstanding, defray a part of the cost of an edition of the scores which would be likely to be bought up by wealthy enthusiasts for their libraries; so that, if it comes to the point, I need only ask the King to purchase some twenty-five or thirty copies. Afterwards, we could, perhaps, proceed to the publication of the older works on similar lines.² * * * *

643. TO FRAU ELIZA WILLE, MARIAFELD

TRIEBSCHEN, 25th June, 1870.

* * I need scarcely tell you what joy your letter and your invitation have given me!—Certainly, we will come, for you shall be the first to whom we present ourselves as married folk. It has taken much patience to reach this point³; a thing inevitable years ago was only to be accomplished at last through all kinds of suffering. Since last I saw you in Munich I have never left the retreat whither, since then, she too fled for refuge—she who was to prove that I *could* be helped, and that the statement of so many of my friends that “I was not to be helped” was untrue. *She* knew I might be helped, and she has helped me. She has braved every insult and taken every condemnation upon herself. She has borne me a wonderfully beautiful and sturdy son,⁴ whom I could audaciously call “Siegfried”; he is flourishing with my works, and is giving me renewed long life, *life which at last has found a meaning*.—

So, then, we get on without the “world,” from which we have retired completely. Thus genuine affection has been tested, and more touching even than the acquisition of new friends has been the loyalty of old ones. My sister, Ottilie Brockhaus, visited us with her family as long ago as late last summer. * * *

But listen, now. You will agree, I hope, that it is right and

¹ See No. 639, note 2.

² This was never done. Cf. letter to Schott of 31 May, 1872.

³ Wagner's marriage to Cosima von Bülow, whose divorce was delayed, did not take place till 25 August, 1870.

⁴ 6 June, 1869.

sensible that I should not come in response to your invitation till I can bring my son's mother with me as my wedded wife also. Now, at last, this time is not far ahead, and we hope to be in Mariafeld before the leaves fall. * * * *

You prophesied it to me, you noble woman! Don't you remember—when you sped me from your hospitable house six years ago? I was miserable—but you looked at me and foretold—you well remember what! Well, my friend, come and convince yourself that you have the good heart of a true prophetess! * * * *

644. TO FRANZ SCHOTT, MAINZ

[LUCERNE], *Autumn* 1870.

* * * I am sorry that you should have felt obliged to take the step of "dunning" me for *Siegfried*. The way *The Valkyrie* was "executed" (appropriate word!) in Munich this year, coupled with the discovery that my most illustrious patron was only waiting the arrival of the *Siegfried* score to subject it to a similar experiment, very seriously disinclined me to finish the latter work. As I am quietly working on very different schemes of my own for the production of the whole *Nibelung* cycle on *my own* lines, I feel more drawn at the moment to composing the last piece, *The Twilight of the Gods*, which is already fairly well advanced. Nevertheless, I have been working on the score of the last act of *Siegfried* as well, and three weeks ago the first half of it was dispatched to Klindworth. The rest will follow by the New Year. If you and he put your best foot forward then, both full score *and* pianoforte arrangement may quite well be out by Easter.—* * * *

645. TO HIS SISTER OTTILIE BROCKHAUS, LEIPZIG

[TRIEBSCHEN, 25th October, 1870.]

* * I like to hear from you, particularly when you have something pleasant to tell me. Your letter to Cosima was very beautiful; even to-day she wept over it again. Yes, she is a marvellous creature! Often I feel it must be only a dream that she is mine. We shall descend upon you in the spring. I want to show my wife all that I value in earlier times, people and places. Then, too, it will be time I looked about me in "the world" a little, to see what there is for me to do there. God knows what I had better do. In the meantime I am resting, and marshalling my forces. I am sending you something for Christmas.—

Many greetings to our dear Hermann and to your sons and daughters. My special thanks to Clemens. He really ought to have

baptised my son. He is called Helferich *Siegfried* Richard Wagner. He is beautiful and strong and is to be a surgeon—what else besides is his own affair. What a tremendous joy for me!!—* * *

646. TO FRANZ SCHOTT, MAINZ

LUCERNE, 13th April, 1871.

* * You must not be so *very* offended with me over the *Kaisermarsch* business. Some time ago Peters's "*Bureau de musique*," of which I knew nothing whatever, made me a spontaneous offer of 1500 francs for such a March if I would write one. Indeed, it was this which first put the idea into my head. I should probably never have thought of it otherwise. The unexpected fee was uncommonly opportune, as I had in view a journey to Germany with my wife, and absolutely no money on which to make it, as my circumstances are still, on the whole, somewhat straitened. To you * * I am still actually in debt for advances, and I could not very well expect you to pay me cash on this occasion.¹ I accepted the offer, then, because it chimed in almost *too* pat with my wishes, and though I thought of you and thought that you would not like it, I believed, too, that—you would end by forgiving me!—Well, now, I ask your pardon! * * * *

* * * I now propose to work (chiefly in Berlin) to get a performance of *The Ring of the Nibelungs* exactly according to my own ideas, which would make a kind of national undertaking of it. On April 28th I am going to lecture there at the Royal Academy² "*On the Destiny of Opera*,"³ and I shall, besides, get influential friends to begin to move on my behalf. You, my most esteemed friend, will have an important part to play in this enterprise, and I want to discuss it with you personally. * * * *

647. TO KARL LANDGRAF, BAYREUTH⁴

LEIPZIG, 11th May, 1871.

* * I am not returning via Bayreuth this time as I told you I should, and you will not see me there till late this summer. I tell you this because I do not want you to think me an ingrate and I hereby confess myself your debtor. Your decoction has done me excellent service.⁵

For the rest, it is now settled that my great Dramatic Festival

¹ See No. 596.

² Of which he had been an honorary member since 1869.

³ *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. ix. Originally published separately in Leipzig, 1871.

⁴ *Bayreuther Briefe*.

⁵ Landgraf was Wagner's family physician.

is to take place in Bayreuth in the summer of 1873,¹ and I am thinking of settling there permanently about that time.

Knowing that you are kind enough to wish me well, and in order that you may be in a position to confute mistaken rumours about my enterprise, I may tell you that while it is true that I have His Majesty the King of Bavaria's permission and support, backed by a very helpful contribution, it is nevertheless my own personal affair, and only to be brought about by the united efforts of a number of very various friends of my art. Accordingly I shall have to approach the town authorities of Bayreuth on the same footing as others, though I think I may reckon on their good will in view of the notice and importance I shall bring to Bayreuth. Late in the summer I shall meet the necessary experts in Bayreuth to choose and buy the ground on which my Festival Theatre is to be erected, and its construction will then be put in hand immediately. I shall also then decide on a plot of land to build myself a house. * * *

648. TO FRIEDRICH FEUSTEL, BAYREUTH

LUCERNE, 1st November, 1871.

* * * * My reasons for choosing Bayreuth as the site for my enterprise may be deduced readily enough, without further explanation from me, from the conditions on which my choice was to be based. I did not want a capital city with a permanent theatre, nor a watering-place which, in summer particularly, would furnish an utterly unsuitable public; it had to be not far from the heart of Germany and a Bavarian town, since I intend to make it my permanent home and I feel it only suitable that this should be in Bavaria while I continue to enjoy the beneficence of the King of Bavaria. But even apart from this, this pleasant place and its surroundings have greatly attracted me from the first,² and the fact that I am still quite a stranger to its inhabitants should not frighten me. * * * *

I take it for granted that the town of Bayreuth is not to be taxed in any way to provide the sinews of my enterprise. Vigorous partisans of my project are active in raising the necessary funds, and their success already empowers me to make arrangements for the purchase of the site of my provisional theatre (although the building of it must in any case be put off till next March, as the present time of year is unsuitable for the work). For this business I expect to come to Bayreuth myself at the end of this month at latest. * * *

¹ It did not take place till 1876.

² 1835. Cf. *My Life*, p. 127.

For the rest, I will now touch on the chief objection to be made against my choice of Bayreuth from the standpoint of the patrons of my enterprise, namely the doubt as to whether sufficient accommodation for visitors is to be had there. The problem will be to secure good lodging for a personnel of some two hundred artistes, etc., for several months and for some two thousand visitors for the month of performances, and to protect them from exorbitant charges. As I have nothing to say on these points of my own knowledge, I put them before you for your kind consideration, and should be very glad to be able to reassure my patrons upon them through you. * * * *

649. TO THE TOWN OF BAYREUTH ¹

LUCERNE, 26th December, 1871.

* * I have very great cause for gratitude in your announcement of the decision of both Municipal Councils of Bayreuth to place freely at my disposal the necessary approaches and surround to the site in the neighbourhood of St. George's Church, chosen for the erection of a Festival Theatre * *.

Since the best I could hope was that my desire to be allowed to make the town of Bayreuth the site of my Festival performances would be kindly acceded to by the authorities, I now confess with great satisfaction that the very hospitable manner in which my wishes have been met, greatly increases my joy in their fulfilment. I shall, I hope, be able to convince you during the fortunate progress of my enterprise of the important assumption I am so bold as to associate with it, namely that my plan for concentrating my ideas for the reform of public art in Germany upon a particular locality, will prove a clear and influential example. The fact that the very hospitable advances of the magistracy of Bayreuth are now added to the other considerations which led me to decide on that city, affords me the most encouraging guarantee that my hopes and wishes will be fulfilled. * * *

650. TO FRANZ SCHOTT, MAINZ

LUCERNE, 3rd January, 1872.

* * * * Moreover, my dear wife is in a perpetual state of excitement, not only over the MS. of my arrangement ² of the *Ninth Symphony* [Beethoven's] which you propose to present to her, but also over the non-arrival of that promised gift! One would have to be as set upon this wretched manuscript of mine as my dear wife

¹ *Bayreuther Briefe*, p. 40.

² See No. 1, vol. i.

is, to understand her attitude. She had quite made up her mind that I should present her with it at Christmas! So please have pity on us both!—

Otherwise all goes very well with us. I am just beginning the *last* act of my huge *Nibelung* work.—* * *

651. TO KARL KLINDWORTH, MOSCOW

LUCERNE, 4th January, 1872.

* * * * As to ourselves, let me tell you that things are going very well and hopefully. On May 22nd we lay the foundation-stone of the theatre. The town of Bayreuth has bestowed a wonderfully fine site for it. Well, this winter will show how the rest will prosper. People are all very encouraging as to results. Whatever happens I shall abide by my plans and feel quite confident of attaining my goal, though perhaps not so soon as I thought. I still set my hopes confidently on 1873.¹—I have begun the composition of the *last* act to-day and hope to have it finished by Easter. I may also have enough time to begin the orchestration of the whole, and in any case the whole score will be completed in the course of the year. You will be amazed—there is such a lot in it!—* * * *

652. TO FRIEDRICH FEUSTEL, BAYREUTH

LUCERNE, 7th February, 1872.

* * * * The thing ** upon which I base my most confident hope is that I have *won you*, my friend! Had I not encountered you with all your special qualities of mind and heart as I pressed towards my goal, I might perhaps have fallen back at the last and given up the attempt to solve the difficulties presented by the task. But there is just one thing which dominates all else, and that is the gravity of my artistic conviction, revealed to me in the consciousness of my mission. Now that, on the rough road my mission compels me to follow, I have met you, my friend, just *as you are* and *where you are*, I recognise the sign as confirmation of the deep designs of Destiny—and you will have to submit to being regarded by me as “endaemonic”!—* * * *

653. TO JULIUS STERN, BERLIN ²

LUCERNE, 12th February, 1872.

* * Having already spoken with you personally on the subject, I now, as friend to friend, renew my request in writing that you will, in my name, ask the excellent singers, both male and female, known to you in Berlin's esteemed Amateur Society, to assist in

¹ See No. 647, note 1, p. 248.

² *An seine Künstler*, p. 2.

as large numbers as possible in my project for a really good performance of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*. I propose to conduct it myself in the old opera-house of Bayreuth on the day of the laying of the foundation-stone for the provisional Festival Theatre on May 22nd this year, if I can be sure of the special co-operation of a picked choir of two hundred men and women and of a hundred instrumentalists selected from among the best members of our foremost orchestras. As the performance is to take place before an audience consisting exclusively of the patrons and other well-wishers of the approaching Festival of Music-Drama in Bayreuth, and accordingly is to serve as a beautiful inauguration ceremony to the latter, I must regard co-operation in it as a free act of sympathy with my enterprise as well as of homage to a great genius, whose blessed patronage I invoke in asking for this sympathy. * * * *

654. TO FRIEDRICH FEUSTEL, BAYREUTH

LUCERNE, 25th February, 1872.

* * * * The most important thing for the moment is that my project for May 22nd should turn out well. I have chosen not to advertise it publicly as yet, as I prefer to get the consent of the musicians and singers first. According to the latest letters received, there seems to be no doubt as to the success of the undertaking. My challenge has been taken up everywhere with enthusiasm, and I have almost too many acceptances from the best musicians in the foremost orchestras of Germany—not less so from the singers.—Well, then, I may reasonably give you the “authority to contract for the labourers to build an orchestra.” * * * *

655. TO THE SAME

LUCERNE, 12th April, 1872.

* * * * I am in entire agreement with your maxims for the distribution of our financial resources. They may be stated more precisely as follows:

(1) The Theatre must never be regarded otherwise than as a *temporary* structure. I should be satisfied if it were built only of wood (like gymnasiums and song-festival halls). It need only be solid enough not to fall in. Therefore here we can save, save—no embellishments! In this building we shall merely outline our idea and leave it to the *nation* to carry it out, in a great monumental pile.

(2) Appliances and scenery—everything which affects the ideal presentation of the work of art to be performed within—must be *quite perfect*. *Nothing* is to be saved here. Everything must be calculated to last a long time—nothing merely temporary.

(3) Singers and musicians will only get their expenses covered, they will *not* get fees from me. Those who will not come for the honour and love of the thing can stay where they are as far as I am concerned. A man or woman singer who would only come to me for the sake of a wretched *wage*—would suit me very well, thank you! Such a person could never satisfy my artistic demands. This, my dearest fellow, is to be *my* miracle, by which I shall show the world how one creates the personnel to solve a problem of this kind—and my friends must have faith in it. * * * *

656. TO KARL RIEDEL, LEIPZIG ¹

LUCERNE, 12th April, 1872.

* * * There is trouble in Bayreuth. The architect cannot accommodate more than two hundred singers on the stage; hence the notices you have received. I have now allotted the entire parterre (including the reserved seats) for the further accommodation of the chorus. I have still to learn how many it will hold. The whole seating accommodation for the audience is only sufficient for seven hundred persons. From this I must now deduct the free seats for the people who are to entertain the orchestra and chorus. One hundred musicians and three hundred singers means four hundred free seats, and at least one hundred seats in the parterre must be given to the singers. Now you can reckon what will be left for my patrons, etc. Notwithstanding, I am determined that no good singer is to be refused admittance (for actually the whole audience should join in the singing!). Accordingly I shall see that the singers you are bringing me have places, but I only promise you this on condition that you, my esteemed friend, bring none but really good singers. As you see, there is no room for a merely morally well-intentioned choir, and, should my patrons apply for places in large numbers, it would be unpardonable to refuse them seats (who make sacrifice after sacrifice for me) in order to accommodate mere "passengers," as the saying goes, who pay nothing. Besides, experience also leads me to the decision. I mean, that so many instrumentalists, on a merely numerical basis, ought to be reckoned to so many singers. At Weber's ² funeral in Dresden the choir were not sufficient for the song I had written and the whole thing sounded wretched and poor till my old choirmaster, Fischer, got together all the soloists and chorus of the theatre and let the thirty or forty of them sing my song together, and then everything else was put into the shade. You understand me?—* * * *

Stern is bringing me fifty-four singers. * * *

¹ *An seine Künstler*, p. 14.

² 1845. Cf. *My Life*, pp. 357, 358.

PART VI

BAYREUTH, 1872-1883

PART VI
BAYREUTH, 1872-1883

657. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

BAYREUTH, 18th May, 1872.

MY GREAT AND DEAR FRIEND!

Cosima says that you would not come, even if I were to invite you! Well, we should have to endure that as we have had to endure so much else! But I cannot forbear to give you the invitation. And what do I say to you when I speak the word "Come"? You came into my life as the greatest man with whom I was ever privileged to use the confident speech of friendship. Slowly you drifted away from me, perhaps because you never felt as intimate with me as I with you. Instead of your personal presence, the regenerate, essential spiritual "you" came to me and fulfilled my longing for a perfect intimacy. Thus in full perfection you live before me, within me, and we are united as if beyond the grave. You were the first to ennoble me with your love; in it I am now espoused to a second, a higher life, and can do what I could never have achieved alone. So you could be all to me, while I could be little to you. How immeasurably, then, I have the advantage of you!

And so when I say to you, "Come!" I say "Come to yourself!" For here you will find yourself. Blessing and love be upon you, whatever you decide! * * *

658. TO JOSEPH HOFFMANN, VIENNA ¹

BAYREUTH, 28th July, 1872.

* * It is my purpose to enlist the aid of the scattered talents of Germany in technical and in other matters in my proposed production of my Dramatic Festival of *The Ring of the Nibelungs*. As regards the scenic presentation, I have decided that nothing in an exalted sense worthy of the German name will be achieved if I leave the task to the ordinary routine scene painter. Accordingly, I desire to lay the sketches of true artists before the best and most efficient scene painters, thereby inciting them to finer work. With

¹ *Bayreuther Briefe*, p. 97.

this object I have already applied to several painters of historical subjects. Recently, however, your work ** has been very strongly recommended to me, and it appears to come very near to being the kind of thing I want. Accordingly I take the liberty of asking you, if you think it worth while, thoroughly to study my poem, *The Ring of the Nibelungs*, in order to make sketches for the principal scenes (indicating both the setting and the personages of the drama), from which either you, should you wish to do so, or certain picked scene painters and stage costumiers, could work. * * * *

659. TO ALBERT NIEMANN, BERLIN

BAYREUTH, 6th November, 1872.

MOST ESTEEMED COMRADE IN THE DRAMATIC FESTIVAL!

There is one thing in your proposal which I find most alluring, namely that you offer me the best, the only cast, for the Tristan rôle which could possibly persuade me now to see my long-neglected work performed. Ever since, five years ago, I coached Mme. Mallinger in Elsa, I have wished to see her as Isolde. Unfortunately, however, I am now obliged to hesitate somewhat in her case, as I cannot regard her as altogether reliable, because of the abuse to which she has subsequently subjected her talent; but perhaps I *could* rely on my own experience and special capacities to restore and lead her back to the road on which she was once so happily set.

You will see, however, that, particularly in respect of this rôle, I am obliged to count on my own very thorough participation in the rehearsals. I could not hand over this work to any kapellmeister. There is one man who knows how to conduct the orchestra at least in the right tempo—but only because he has learnt to do so under my most exact instructions. But I could not trust even Bülow with the guidance of the singers—of Mme. Mallinger in particular.

And so we always come back to the old difficulty which we would so gladly evade. I must be on the spot and have full control of everything if an experiment so entirely new as the production of *Tristan* is to “go.” (I do not, indeed, propose to take the baton myself; but as to *how* I manage without this immediate participation when I have a not unskilful and friendly and well-meaning kapellmeister [Eckert] at my disposal, friend Betz, who saw exactly how I dealt with *The Mastersingers*, can best inform you.)

Even supposing that your manager [von Hulsen] made no objection to my co-operation, I should still fear that, in the course of it, I might come upon a number of obstacles, in regard to which I should need very strong guarantees in advance.

Firstly, the repertory must be carefully arranged to fit in with the series of rehearsals. * * *—Another difficulty is that the orchestra has been reduced by your manager to an inadequate number of strings. * * *

If a possibly growing disposition in my favour is manifested in encouraging reassurances on these and other points, and if I should accordingly decide to begin rehearsals for *Tristan* with you, I should be obliged to reside permanently in Berlin between now and the performance—that is, January, by your calculations—and—that is just what I cannot do this year, as I have undertaken to devote the whole of this winter to taking stock of all the singers of all the theatres in Germany, great and small. I set off in the next few days and God knows where and how long I shall have to stay in various places!

I have, however, made a proposal to my esteemed patroness, Frau von Schleinitz, who has taken so much trouble on my behalf, which, if taken up, might bring me this winter into very agreeable relations with the Berlin Opera. In Berlin, as everywhere else, much useful work is to be done this winter to help on my Bayreuth enterprise. My friends are thinking of getting up a big concert, with which I personally shall have nothing to do, even if it should be arranged on a scale splendid and lucrative as that in Vienna last May. On the other hand, I have proposed, should the Royal Theatre wish magnanimously to take the initiative in this matter, that *Lohengrin* should be given *in full* under my supervision, and I have suggested that, for the sake of the cause, I should, if all goes well, personally conduct the orchestra.¹ For this purpose I should have to stay in Berlin for a fortnight at most and—it should be a propitious beginning of acquaintance between the Berlin Court Theatre and myself, which might very possibly be continued with equal good will on both sides.

May I ask you, then, to do what you can to get this proposal accepted and not to regard my present rejection of your *Tristan* project² as in any way due to ingratitude on my part for your enthusiastic exertions on behalf of the same? * * *

660. TO HEINRICH PORGES, MUNICH

BAYREUTH, 6th November, 1872.

* * * Even before you wrote to me I had assigned you a function in my projected enterprise of very great importance for the future.

¹ This did not come off.

² *Tristan* was first performed in Berlin on 20 March, 1876. The Master superintended the final rehearsals, as proposed, in 1872.

As a matter of fact, I wished to ask you to follow all my rehearsals, just as you did for the *Ninth Symphony*, and to note and write down every remark of mine, however intimate, bearing on the interpretation and performance of our work, so that a fixed tradition might be established.¹

I hope this may be considered settled! But if you are willing to help me with the purely mechanical musical coaching of the individual singers, you will be very welcome to me. I cannot make any actual engagement in this respect, and all you may have read about it in newspaper paragraphs is vain boasting, which will do no good to the boasters. * * *

661. TO FRANZ SCHOTT, MAINZ

BAYREUTH, 16th April, 1873.

* * * * You ask after *The Twilight of the Gods*? After many tiresome interruptions, I completed the composition of this work last summer. Since then I have been so exhausted by constant anxieties and exertions in respect of my big undertaking that I must still put off my working out of the score. * * * *

I may now tell you *, as my publishers, that from June 1st onwards you will get regular consignments of the score of *The Twilight of the Gods*. May I ask you to be so good as to put the printing in hand at once and proceed vigorously? You can then send the separate scenes as they are ready (perhaps in proof) to Klindworth in Moscow. If we work thus together uninterruptedly (as most definitely I personally propose to do), we may count on having all ready by Easter 1874. * * * *

662. TO HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW, HERMANN BROCKHAUS, LEIPZIG

BAYREUTH, 30th December, 1873.

* * * Thank you, my dearest brother-in-law! The Order of Maximilian seems to have appeared a weightier matter to your kind interest in me than it has appeared to myself. Just nine years ago, by the choice of the Chapter of the Order, my name was proposed to the King of Bavaria. At the time, knowing absolutely nothing of this Order or its statutes, I simply received a communication from the Secretary of the Cabinet, saying that the King (on his own initiative, as I was left to suppose) wished to present me with this Order, and asking if I would accept. Thereupon, I replied that

¹ Cf. Heinrich Porges's "Die Bühnenproben zum *Ring des Nibelungen*," in *Bayreuther Blätter*, 1878 (also published separately).

I besought the King graciously to abstain from this fresh mark of his favour at a moment when his relations with me were already attracting more than enough hostile attention, and added that I had reached an age when, having seen my pupils decorated with Orders of all kinds, I could well be content with this for the rest of my life. The Cabinet, glad of the opportunity to create bad blood between me and the Chapter of the Order, and thus make my position in Munich still more untenable, used my declaration to do all the harm they desired, and it was not till some time later that I learned that Liebig, Kaulbach and the rest, felt I had deeply insulted them. Well, when after nine years these gentlemen re-asserted their choice, I felt really rather touched, and this time, when the matter was put before me correctly and formally, I quietly let it proceed, even though to do so robbed me of the pride of going to my grave without suchlike honours. * * * *

663. TO FRANZ SCHOTT, MAINZ

BAYREUTH, 23rd January, 1874.

* * I need ten thousand gulden to finish my house and garden. Should you be willing to advance me this sum at once against the compositions I am pledged to deliver you, I would engage to let you have six great orchestral works, each of the length and importance of a big overture, at six months' intervals, the first, at latest, at the end of this year, 1874.¹

By midsummer we shall have finished the publication of *The Twilight of the Gods*. I shall then have time to carry out plans which have long occupied my mind, and that will put me in better humour than the writing of dramatic scores, which I know will for the most part be left to languish by our theatres, whereas I have always been fortunate with orchestral compositions. Now I can form a fair computation of the value of such a piece from the offer made me by the firm of Peters when they wanted to secure a new orchestral composition from me after the success of the *Kaisermarsch*. They offered one thousand thalers, and I believe I should have little difficulty in getting them to pay me for six such works in advance. Quite apart from this, though, I now want to make use of the possibility of earning some money to provide what I need to finish my house, which, as is usual, has involved many unforeseen expenses.

¹ Though Schott acceded to Wagner's wishes (see No. 664) the latter unfortunately never succeeded in delivering even one such orchestral piece (see No. 673). The *Siegfried Idyll*, published in 1878, dates from 1869. The *Festival March for the Hundredth Anniversary of the Independence of the U.S.A.* was, indeed, published by Schott, but was done to American orders.

If my proposal, my wish, my request, are somewhat unusual—well, it is *Franz Schott* to whom I make them, and, when all's said and done, it is *Richard Wagner* who does so! * * * *

664. TO THE SAME

BAYREUTH, 9th February, 1874.

MY HIGHLY ESTEEMED FRIEND AND PATRON!

It is a real joy to me, as I sign the contract¹ you place before me, to enter with you into an undertaking so advantageous and honourable to both parties. * * * *

Fate has assuredly reserved for me sound health, long life and mental vigour, so that one man in Germany may carry through work really needing two lifetimes. Besides, I still have to make a fine fellow of my son. Now let me serve you as an example, my worthy friend, and do you keep vigorous pace with me! * * *

665. TO KARL KLINDWORTH, MOSCOW

BAYREUTH, 14th February, 1874.

* * I am just dispatching your manuscript of the pianoforte arrangement [of *The Twilight of the Gods*] to Mainz. I found it hard this time to let it go thus. As I went through it in my, no doubt, very clumsy fashion, I felt very conscious of the burdensome, the overwhelming difficulties of my life. There are you, now, in Moscow, and here am I, deprived of the use of all the organs of my artistic life! How few people I have found in the whole course of my life of whom I can say that I could get on with them and would like to work with them! And how I am cut off from these!—

So, now, with this gigantic labour of making a pianoforte arrangement from such a score! To hit on the right thing, we ought to have been able to discuss it together page by page! Well, that is now impossible and, in consequence, we both torment ourselves. In the end I left everything as you had put it—I only dared to intervene at one point. * * *

Well, God knows, desperate situations of this kind leave little to be said. What are we to do? Anyhow, I believe we should (1) not expend too much art on arpeggios and figures but, on the contrary, (2) emphasise the chief part, if necessary even at the expense of the middle harmonic parts and, where this obscures the meaning, (3) prefer to use (as, indeed, you have already done) an explanatory stave with little notes.

Very few people play a pianoforte arrangement such as you

¹ About the proposal in No. 663.

have conceived; better, therefore, to have regard for none but the accomplished musician from the first, and make it *intelligible* at least to him—a thing which it will be very difficult to do if the score is to be rendered entirely in pianoforte terms (as for example in Bülow's arrangement of *Tristan*). After all, very few will be able to play it—even after much practice. Well, then, better a mere indication, seeing that even as it is the ordinary pianist can only manage by omitting half the notes.—* * * *

666. TO EMIL HECKEL, MANNHEIM

BAYREUTH, 5th March, 1874.

* * The King's signature has just arrived. He gives us credit amounting to 100,000 thalers upon his own private exchequer, wherewith for the time being to meet the cost of staging, scenery and the instalment of gas-lighting. While this credit runs, all money coming in from patrons is to be credited to the Royal Exchequer till the sum advanced is covered, and, until then, the purchases mentioned are to be the property of the Royal Secretariat. This is the bargain.

You will see from this that we are now in a position to go forward, but that we receive no actual contribution and are thrown back, now as formerly, on the interest of the public to make our enterprise really possible.

Now in all that you say, write or publish on the subject I want to ask you to use the caution and foresight necessary to promote two ends: (1) by representing the assistance we have received as surety that our enterprise will actually take place; (2) by avoiding giving the impression that there is no longer any need to help us.

We think it best, then, simply to announce the actual fact, namely that very binding contracts have been concluded with the painter, Hoffmann of Vienna, and with the Court Theatre machinist, Brandt, for scenery and stage appliances, to be completed as speedily as possible.

I think this will be sufficient to obviate all objections. I myself am about to write to the singers I have selected and to give orders about the orchestra, and all this will soon lend a different aspect to the business. * * * *

667. TO FRANZ BETZ, BERLIN ¹

BAYREUTH, 8th March, 1874.

* * It is only very recently that I have been in a position to give you definite news regarding the fulfilment of the big scheme

¹ W. Altmann's *Richard Wagner und Albert Niemann*, Berlin, 1924.

of which you have heard, and consequently to endeavour to come to terms with you on matters of detail. Accordingly I have to tell you that I am asking each of the distinguished singers who have promised me their co-operation in the Festival Performance of my *Ring of the Nibelungs* to come to Bayreuth during the coming summer and spend a week or somewhat more there, each according to the requirements of the assigned rôles. The actual dates can be left entirely to the choice of those concerned, only it is very necessary that each should have ample time to go once through his part thoroughly with me. I can then get the singers to study their parts during their winter engagements, on lines suggested by me on this occasion, and get them to rehearse again on agreed dates.

In the summer of 1875 I shall require to get all the singers together for at least a whole month, at whatever time we may decide to be most convenient. Then we will hold rehearsals on the stage itself, with a trial orchestra and the most difficult scenic devices, to test our capacities and discover how far we have got with our study. * * *

Afterwards, in 1876, we shall assemble for three months, June, July and August. The first two months will be spent exclusively in full rehearsals of the four pieces. * * * In August the three complete performances will take place in three successive weeks—Sunday, *The Rhinegold*; Monday, *The Valkyrie*; Tuesday, *Siegfried*; and Wednesday, *The Twilight of the Gods*. * * * *

Having given you a general outline of my plans, I now ask you * * to grant me your co-operation in bringing them to fulfilment. Now, as ever, I count on you to carry through the exacting rôle of Wotan. In the case of many other singers, I propose to give them several parts alternately. Also I count on our mutual friend Niemann to take the part at any rate of Siegmund, and I do not deny that, as he is undoubtedly the most suitable person, I would like to give him the part of Siegfried as well, if I were not afraid that the two tasks might overtax his strength and that we might in consequence be left in a very difficult position. At present I have no singer in view for Siegfried.

In case it is necessary to touch on the point at once, I may say as regards the pecuniary indemnification of the singers taking part, that there can of course be no question of an *honorarium*, as is usual with visiting artistes, as the best we can hope for is that the money contributed to assist us will make the performances possible, and it will certainly not cover profits for any of those taking part.

In calculating the sum needed to cover the expenses of those who give their time and talents and so alone make the performances

possible, I have gone on the assumption that *prima donnas*, for example, who will only sing for an honorarium of such and such a sum, are no use to me (and on this account, let me say in passing, I have had to my disappointment to forgo the talented Mme. Mallinger). I have accordingly resolved to allow each of the twenty singers I require travelling and hotel expenses at a maximum rate of five hundred thalers a month, hoping, indeed, that many will be satisfied with less, as there are many of the younger ones who would willingly come on an entirely voluntary basis if I were to invite them. It will be very much more difficult to keep down the expenses of the orchestra (a hundred strong), as a number of musicians must be employed who have no settled engagement and consequently no regular salary. * * * *

668. TO KARL HILL, SCHWERIN ¹

BAYREUTH, 8th March, 1874.

* * * * I was very much prepossessed in your favour by your talented performance in *The Flying Dutchman* which I witnessed, and I assure you that I see no task even in my great tetralogy which I am not convinced you could accomplish excellently. I have, however, assigned you the most difficult rôle in every respect, one which it gave me great anxiety to cast, namely that of Alberich, a part filled with daemonic, passionate tragedy. The part runs through three of the pieces, *The Rhinegold*, *Siegfried* and *The Twilight of the Gods*. I can hardly wish you to go to the trouble of studying it in advance as I should prefer to introduce you to it myself, feeling that I am the only person competent to do so. Still I should be glad if you would look into the poem beforehand. * * * *

669. TO JOSEPH HOFFMANN, VIENNA ²

BAYREUTH, 12th October, 1874.

* * It is no wish of *mine* that you should withdraw from further participation in the execution of your own designs for scenery. I have proved to you that it was my wish to maintain pleasant relations, favourable to the progress of the work, between you and the gentlemen who had actually to carry out your designs. At this juncture it is not for me to try to throw light on the reasons why this eventually proved impossible. * * * My one actual wish is that you and I, two honourable men, should part—for the present—in peace. As to the question of the compensation to be paid you, it belongs to a department which I must, if I am to maintain the

¹ *An seine Künstler*, p. 50.² *Bayreuther Briefe*, p. 182.

resolution necessary to carry through my whole enterprise, leave wholly to the conscience of the trustees for the financial side, men who are pledged to the strictest economy, while remembering that I, for my own part, have ruled out all idea of profit.

As soon as Messrs. Brückner have definitely decided to proceed with these decorations, I promise you to consider how you may be compensated in future, when profits accrue on your (moral) copyright, for your share in the work hitherto. * * *

670. TO ALBERT NIEMANN, BERLIN

BAYREUTH, 28th November, 1874
(on which day 11 years ago I too was in Berlin!).

* * The first sign of the idleness to which I have abandoned myself since finishing the score of *The Twilight of the Gods*, shall be this letter to you, written without any business occasion and in sheer "*gaieté de cœur*" (as the Latins say).

We have pleasant memories of your last stay with us. I dread the coming year, when everything will be in such dead earnest. I realise that there are still many *lacunæ* to be filled up in our "ideal" personnel and that it is my duty in the circumstances to set out personally as voyager of discovery or verification. In the first place I must get a Sieglinde for my formidable Siegmund. But where? Cannot you help me? (Could we not kill Herr Mallinger, for instance? ¹) * * *

I shall probably only visit Vienna (and Budapest) for business purposes, as I found I was obliged to commission certain work at the theatre and to undertake to raise 15,000 gulden for it, a sum which I hope to accumulate (there!) in concert takings. * * *

* * * Be good and sing Lohengrin and all the other nonsense and help on the work on "*Wahnfried*." * * *

671. TO KARL EMIL DOEPLER, BERLIN ²

BAYREUTH, 17th December, 1874.

* * I take the liberty of asking you whether you would care to undertake the design and superintend the making of the costumes for the proposed Festival Performance of my tetralogy, *The Ring of the Nibelungs*, in the summer of 1876.³

To give you some preliminary idea of the character of the task,

¹ See close of No. 667. Mme. Mallinger's husband asked too large a sum on her behalf.

² *Bayreuther Briefe*, p. 187.

³ Doepler undertook the contract,

I send you a copy of the dramatic poem, together with certain pamphlets relating to its performance. You will realise at once that it was my perception of the difficulties involved which decided me to seek for an artist particularly experienced and talented in this branch of work.

I regard the problem I have set as offering a rich field for invention, for I actually ask no less than a characteristic picture made up of individual human figures, which will call up before our eyes with arresting vividness the people and events of a bygone culture far removed from the world of our experience. You will also discover very speedily that mediæval conceptions of the figures of the *Nibelungenlied*, which have gained a certain measure of acceptance through the work of Cornelius, Schnorr and others, must be altogether set aside in this instance. On the other hand, recent study of attempts to illustrate specifically northern mythology reveals that the artists have taken refuge in mere reproduction of the classical antique with certain supposedly characteristic modifications. The intimations to be found in Roman writers who came into contact with Germanic peoples as to the costume of the latter do not appear as yet to have found practical application. In my opinion, therefore, the artist who cares to make a study of my subject has a very special field of research and invention open to him, and it would give me great satisfaction to know that this task was in your hands * * . * * *

672. TO THE SINGERS TAKING PART IN THE DRAMATIC FESTIVAL ¹

[BAYREUTH], 14th January, 1875.

Through our personal interviews, which have been a source of great pleasure to me, you have learned of my desire for your co-operation in my enterprise, namely the performance, thrice in succession under quite exceptional conditions, of my tetralogy entitled *The Ring of the Nibelungs*. I believe that if my intention is to be realised I need not only exceptional efforts on the part of wealthy amateurs and patrons of my art, but also the very hearty good will of the talented artistes whose assistance I have secured, since my patrons' sympathy can and should only be enlisted to support an enterprise from which all thought of profitable speculation has been excluded. Accordingly, you see yourself called upon—perhaps for the first time in your artistic career—to devote your powers simply and solely to the attainment of an artistic ideal, namely that of showing the German public what the German can

¹ *An seine Künstler*, p. 80.

do in a domain most peculiarly his own, and of placing before the foreigner, on whose leavings we have for the most part existed hitherto, something which he cannot possibly imitate.

Allow me personally to point out to you the duties which, on this presupposition of mine, you will undertake if you ** ultimately accord me your co-operation. * * *

The first preliminary rehearsals are to take place in Bayreuth from July 1st to August 15th, this year, 1875. * * * *

These preparations having been accomplished during 1875, the months of June and July of the following year, 1876, are to be devoted to full rehearsals of the entire work. By this I mean that, carefully avoiding overstrain and fatigue, we shall day by day, from June 1st to July 15th, rehearse with orchestra and scenery the separate parts of the tetralogy in succession—*The Rhinegold*, *The Valkyrie*, *Siegfried* and *The Twilight of the Gods*, and from July 15th to 30th all four pieces as seems advisable.

In the first week of August 1876 the first performance of the whole work ** will take place. * * *

In the same way the second and third performances will follow in the second and third weeks in August.

In telling you of my plans for the performance, I do so in accordance with a very close appreciation both of the difficulties of my enterprise and, on the other hand, of our artistes' powers of achievement once their unconditional and ready co-operation is assured. * * *

I now ask you if you will give your binding assent, thus assuring me that I may count on your co-operation in the production of my tetralogy and, at the same time, if you will name the sum you wish to claim for expenses.

From the description I have given you above of the attitude I have adopted towards the patrons of the undertaking, you will recognise that there can be no thought of profit for any of the participants and that a certain degree of sacrifice even must be required. * * * *

673. TO A. L. MAZIÈRE (B. SCHOTT AND SONS), MAINZ

BAYREUTH, 3rd February, 1875.

* * Yesterday I sent Frau Betty Schott the first piece of work I should care to call a musical composition, done amidst the distracting external affairs of these days and since the completion of *The Twilight of the Gods*. It is an "Albumblatt" dedicated and specially intended for her. As I shall shortly be engaged on a big

and very exhausting concert tour to increase the funds for our Bayreuth Festival, I cannot possibly begin work on the big orchestral pieces¹ which I planned and promised you, and shall probably not be able to do so till next autumn and winter, when I hope to get some leisure. I know that you will not press me on the point, but I should much have liked to have been able to give you one of the pieces by now. * * * *

674. TO FRIEDRICH FEUSTEL, BAYREUTH

BAYREUTH, 17th April, 1875.

* * I compliment you very heartily on the three articles in the *Oberfränkische Zeitung* which you were so good as to send me, and am confirmed anew in an opinion of you which prompts the wish to see you take a larger share in our political administration.—I could almost have wished for more, although the very precision and brevity of your arguments throws a great deal of light on certain very difficult subjects. * * *

I still disagree with your estimate of French affairs. It seems to me that for the present all the Radicalism there aims simply at the suppression, the total suppression, if possible, of Jesuit ultramontanism. For the rest, it seems to me that the so-called "Blues," the bourgeois Republicans, are the only ones who have a chance there. Accordingly, I believe that Jesuits and—Jews are more to be feared than the Radicals, who will never meditate "*revanche*." This would only be entertained by a dynastic "Pretender," but such an one has few prospects if my estimate of the tendencies of the present-day French Republican is correct.

—It interested me to learn that the Germans spend as much on tobacco as on their Army!—How extraordinary! * * *

675. TO A. L. MAZIÈRE (B. SCHOTT AND SONS), MAINZ

BAYREUTH, 18th May, 1875.

* * * I learn through Herr Seidl that you would like me to make a bid for favour by affixing my signature to copies of *The Twilight of the Gods*, which you intend to distribute to editors of newspapers. I cannot possibly do this. I do not wish to hinder your shrewd and well-thought-out policy in the least, but I should like any favours in that quarter to be accorded in response to the courtesy of the firm of Schott and not to any readiness on my part to do homage, as I pride myself on having reached the age of sixty-two without,

¹ See No. 663.

I am happy to say, having allowed myself to be seduced on any occasion into making the slightest concession to the gentlemen of the Press. * * * *

676. TO PROSPÈRE SAINTON, LONDON

BAYREUTH, 4th June, 1875.

* * You had no need to recall yourself to my memory. I have dictated my entire life-history to my wife.¹ She wished to know all about it. It is written now and is to be bequeathed to my son for publication after my death. Come now, do you imagine that you do not figure in it? The deuce you do! W. 8 Hind Street? And Lüders? The whole story of you both is set down in this manuscript,² from Helsingfors to Toulouse (via Hamburg). And then London? Charlemagne? Where is your judgment, my dearest fellow?

Well, then, just remember that a certain conductor of the old Philharmonic is living (pensioned?) in Bayreuth (in Bavaria, not in Syria!). * * * *

677. TO EMIL HECKEL, MANNHEIM

BAYREUTH, 25th June, 1875.

Ah! ah! friend Heckel! So your opinion changes so easily, does it? A little while ago you still advocated Unger—now you pin your faith to Jäger? Well, I am at it with Unger now. I have gone to great trouble to correct his Saxon vocalisation, which made his voice wholly unintelligible, but I believe now that I shall do better with him than with any other tenor known to me. I shall keep him here permanently, too. He was plainly a lost creature, though not lacking in energy. Jäger is excellent, but——. * * *

678. TO FRANZ BETZ, BERLIN³

BAYREUTH, 5th October, 1875.

* * * * Please do not on any account let yourself be misled by my mistake in casting the better artiste⁴ for the part of Kurwenal! I have paid for my error heavily enough already, for it has been perpetuated, and neglect in the casting of Mark has reduced this important rôle to ineffectiveness, so that the force of the whole of

¹ See No. 640.

² A few copies of it had already been printed.

³ *An seine Künstler*, p. 139.

⁴ Anton Mitterwurzer, who sang Kurwenal at the first performance, was better than the Mark of that occasion (Zottmain of Hanover). After 1876 Betz sang Mark in Berlin.

the second act and of the greater part of the third act has been lost. The parts in the order of their importance may be set out as follows:

I. Tristan = Isolde = Mark

II. Kurwenal = Brangane = Melot

Only believe me and have a good look at Mark—yes, only read through his part!—Well, it does not look to me as though anything would really come of *Tristan* in Berlin this winter! It is a hard and difficult enterprise, my lads, and demands long and ardent wooing! If only *you* remain faithful and true to me! I need a few good men, for I have difficulties, anxieties, troubles and worries enough and to spare! * * *

679. TO HERMANN LEVI, MUNICH ¹

BAYREUTH, 9th October, 1875.

* * My best thanks to you and to the excellent Vogls. Briefly, my reply to your kind proposal is simply that I think the time is past for giving concerts or anything else of the kind in support of the Bayreuth enterprise. It is assured now, although at the moment there are still a few difficulties to be overcome. My chief support is in the good will of my singers and musicians. We shall not break up next year till after the three performances; everything will be in order then. Say no more to me about my disinclination to the performance of fragments at concerts! Moreover, it would be too great a strain to me even to conduct a stage performance of *Tristan* myself, and I have, therefore, left this to trusted conductors for some years past.

I am, indeed, very sorry not to be able for the moment to pursue further my acquaintance so happily begun with the excellent Vogls. If only I had them both in Vienna! How I should like to rehearse *Tannhäuser* with him, for example! I was opposed to a mere hasty "starring" in a few performances of *Tristan* in Vienna, but if the two singers could settle there for a longer period, I would very gladly rehearse *Tristan* with *them* afresh. I wrote as much recently to the director Jauner, adding that I had no heart for the coming production of *Tannhäuser* with the present Viennese personnel. * * * *

I am very glad that you remember me, only it still seems to me that you are not clear about my relations with Munich. Among the public there it is not the "old men" with whom I wish to have no dealings; on the contrary, I prize very highly the whole Munich

¹ *An seine Künstler*, p. 140.

public from childhood to old age, and I have never had any complaints to make against it. Just as certainly it is not the artistes—neither singers nor musicians—but certain ghosts there whom I prefer not to encounter again! * * * *

680. TO LORENZ VON DÜFFLIPP, MUNICH ¹

BAYREUTH, 1st January, 1876.

* * In these last hours of New Year's Day I feel a warm impulse to send you a word, a greeting from me!

I am deeply moved when I think of our last meeting in Munich. Rest assured that I understand it well and know how to value it. We are united by our love for one ² whom we both still find so difficult to understand!—

Since I left you I have had much to vex me, but also much to rejoice in. In Vienna ³ I was really thinking of the interests of my family; from the point of view of art I would much rather have worked in Munich. But, unfortunately, I have been forced to see that our most gracious Sovereign does not set much store by my personal participation in operatic productions.—

Recent calls on the Treasury have made things very difficult for me as regards the Dramatic Festival fixed for this year. Without credit in other quarters we shall be unable to institute final preparation. Trouble after trouble overtakes me and the loyal gentlemen on my committee of management. Yet I am resolved to carry the thing through and hope I have not increased the number of *your* troubles with these plaints.

My sole purpose was to tell you that I hold you ever in grateful remembrance. * * *

681. TO GEORG UNGER, MUNICH ⁴

BAYREUTH, 1st January, 1876.

* * * I may, indeed, say that I have met with nothing but adversity since the close of our preliminary rehearsals. On the other hand, it is comforting to turn my eyes on you. You are entered, together with Hey, in my book of hope.—Since Schnorr's death I knew that I was isolated and thrown upon the untried and unknown. I had no hope of coming upon the finished product and supposed I should

¹ Röckl, p. 141. See note on No. 610.

² King Ludwig II.

³ Richard Wagner had been there for three weeks supervising the production of *Tannhäuser* in the Paris version with a few further alterations (performed on 22 November, 1875), and also the rehearsal of *Lohengrin* (15 December).

⁴ *An seine Künstler*, p. 156.

have to do the constructive work myself. What I sought was not merely good and sufficient natural talent, but character and earnestness of purpose on which I could rely and which I could feel was destined for me.—

Now you have pleased me greatly in both these respects. Put your trust in me always! * * * I think of giving *Tristan* with you in Vienna late next autumn.¹ If our divine Hey should wish to study it a little with you in advance, may I ask you not to do so until you are sure of Siegfried down to the tiniest muscle. For—— in *one* part one can learn things of use in acting all other parts, but this *one* part must be fully assimilated! When you are as perfect as needs be in Siegfried, Tristan, for you, will be only a matter of memorising.

But you might go on with the smithy lessons with Mime, who as “locksmith”² ought to be fairly well versed in the craft already. I should be glad, too, if Hey would take this Mime in hand a little. It was apparent recently that he had not got quite the right idea of his difficult task. He must assume a *false voice*, but the voice itself must not sound untrue. It would be a good thing for him to sing his difficult part very correctly at first in his natural tones (as a lyrical tenor, shall we say!). Once he has quite mastered the enormous difficulties of pitch, he may, *as an actor*, do justice to the dramatic characterisation by distorting his voice in a certain sense, that is to say, making it appear hoarser and rougher. But he must not *begin* with this, and that was what he looked like doing at the preliminary rehearsals. He intended it to be dramatically perfect at once—and made us all laugh.—Well, then?—* * * *

For the rest, if ever you come across a more excellent man and teacher of singing than our Hey, you might let me know of it! I should like to know what he would look like! For our glorious Hey is my ideal up to now in every respect!—let him believe it or not!³ * * *

682. TO KARL BRANDT, DARMSTADT

BAYREUTH, 3rd January, 1876.

* * I am very sad to have heard nothing from you for so long! It is not that I want to get anything out of it save the comfort of receiving a sign of life from you. After all, we are the only two who

¹ This did not take place.

² The Munich tenor who sang Mime in Bayreuth in 1876 was named Anton Schlosser, “Schlosser” in German meaning “locksmith.” (TRANS.)

³ For Wagner’s views of correct singing, see his letter of 20 June, 1870, in *Richard Wagner Briefe an Hans Richter* (Berlin and Vienna, 1924).

were agreed from the first as to the carrying out of the work, and the finest thing so far has been the reception on your finished stage. Why have you forgotten all about me now?

I might have been pardoned for much. Things have not gone well with me since the end of our preliminary rehearsals. Hemmed in between swindlers, perjurers and rogues of all kinds, it is long since I drew a cheerful breath.—

I have really no business matter to discuss with you. Difficulties of all sorts—yet firm resolution and confidence! Frau Jaide has written to me very beautifully. She is plainly the most gifted and the most “conscious” artiste of the ladies in our company. I was, no doubt, right to estimate her so highly from the first. It is possible she will be most useful to me in not undertaking the biggest rôles, but in carrying through two episodes which need just as great an artiste as do the bigger parts. * * * *

683. TO JULIUS HEY, MUNICH¹

BAYREUTH, 3rd January, 1876.

* * * * In Vienna recently I got a renewed glimpse of the quality of our singers—of our tenors in particular—which very much depressed me. I was forced to ask myself once more how it was I conceived the notion of writing all my chief spiritually significant rôles for the tenor voice! But my most remarkable discovery was that these people have no real *voices*, and I could only make this plain to the kapellmeister and director by pointing out that their voices are incapable of euphony. “Just listen,” cried I, “how Herr Müller, for example, brings out that ‘Thanks be to thee, my lovely swan!’” That was a bombshell! Then I went to great trouble, in particular forbade the singer to take breath so often, and attempted to get at least a seeming euphony by all possible evenness and a consequent subduing of the naturally harsh tones. Yes! Let people try to get that effect quickly if they can!! This charming pulsating “smile” in the voice that costs no pains and yet captures and enchants the soul! It is a thing unknown to-day! In Tichatschek it was a natural gift, vocal euphony. The last time when I came upon Unger at the *Nibelung* headquarters and he finally sang from *Siegfried*, it was principally the great industry he had expended on his studies which decided me in his favour. But what gave me real hopes of him (and of you, dear friend) were the mere singing exercises in *solfeggio* that I overheard from outside before I came into the room to you. I hope Unger will not on any account neglect

¹ Julius Hey's *Richard Wagner als Vortragsmeister* (Richard Wagner as Producer), p. 222. Leipzig, 1911.

these mere vocal exercises, because he thinks little of them, does not yet see their bearing on his part, or the like. This is what I ask of him, and I am glad to see him justifying the good opinion of him which led me to embark on the lawsuit,¹ feeling that I was concerned not only for the "Siegfried," but for Unger, the singer, himself! * * * *

684. TO FRANZ BETZ, BERLIN ²

BAYREUTH, 22nd January, 1876.

* * Thank you for your vote as touching Scaria. His demands—even his demand to be paid in advance and at once, might ultimately have been met, but what can we have in common with a man who chooses to stand entirely outside the fellowship to which alone the success of my enterprise will be due? It was impossible to think of having him amongst us, particularly side by side with my Berliners, whose noble disinterestedness is beyond all praise. Consequently—I have made up my mind to forgo his co-operation. —You recommend Fricke? And that brings me to my other point.

If Fricke is so good, why did not you—and still more Niemann—urge his claim more definitely before? And that leads me to the *Tristan* business. Up to now Eckert is the only one who has given me any news of it, but I have not been able to make much of what he tells me. I should very much like to know if anything serious is likely to come of it. If so, if you believe it is so, this Berlin *Tristan* must now become an exceedingly important—and anxious—concern of mine. It is likely enough that the matter *is* serious. Since the first performances in Munich eleven years ago, *Tristan* has become a legend. The performance in Weimar (with the Vogls) may well have made the legend still more incredible. * * * Jauner told me that Niemann declared he *did not wish* to sing *Tristan* after they had both witnessed a performance in Munich last summer, and really, with such a model before him, I cannot blame him. If they are serious about it in Berlin I should feel very deeply interested. I am very concerned that this performance should not be a mere curiosity but a perfect, an unexceptionable production.

Frankly, now, between ourselves, how is it with Niemann? I hear—from Eckert chiefly—that he is extraordinarily well and in good voice. Remarkable man as he is, I am willing to believe this. But how about his good will and the spirit he brings to the job?—

¹ Unger, having rashly pledged himself to the Düsseldorf Theatre, did not fulfil his engagement but went to Munich to study under Hey. An action was brought against him.

² *An seine Künstler*, p. 165.

Have you really any serious difficulties with the rôle of Mark—on account of its somewhat low pitch? Are you discontented with it, or do you regard this most pathetic and significant part as I do and rejoice to have undertaken it? I would not for the world have anything carried through here under constraint and with shoulder-shruggings. If, at the worst, you should think Fricke more suitable (inconceivable to me!), or should you even prefer Kurwenal,¹ tell me. Only not this lack of will and lack of confidence! Surely you understand me? Early in March I shall come to Berlin. If everyone and everything is not exceedingly well disposed, then—!!! * * *

685. TO HERMANN RITTER, HEIDELBERG ²

BAYREUTH, 28th March, 1876.

* * I am truly sorry not to have been able to find time to go into the matter of your *Altgeige* as thoroughly as I feel is necessary if I am to do my part to get this instrument the notice it demands. I am convinced that the general adoption of the *Altgeige* into our orchestras will for the first time do justice to the conceptions of composers who have been obliged to put up with the ordinary tenor violin when they really had in mind the tone of the *Altgeige* for their melody, and that, furthermore, it may bring about an important and very advantageous change in the whole handling of the string-quartet. The open A string of this no longer thin and nasal but clear and tuneful instrument will be able to take the place of the "stopped" A string of the violin in many a vigorous melody, as in their register the violins hitherto have impeded energetic proclamation of tone, so that Weber, for example, has very frequently been obliged to resort for strength to a wind-instrument, clarinet or oboe. The *Altgeige* will render this unnecessary in future and free the composer from the compulsion of using mixed colours when his conception is for strings alone. It is to be hoped now that this improved and very greatly ennobled instrument will be distributed to our best orchestras at once, and that the foremost viola players will be urgently recommended to cultivate it seriously. We must be prepared for great opposition in this matter as, unfortunately, the majority of our orchestral viola players are not exactly the flower of our string-instrumentalists. One stirring example, however, will bring us disciples, and in the end kapellmeisters and managers will have to lend encouragement. I very much regret that you brought your business to my notice so late in the day and that,

¹ See No. 678.

² *An seine Künstler*, p. 174.

moreover, I have been so very much in demand lately that I have been unable to do very assiduously even what might have been done in so short a time. Please give me news of the reception of your instrument by the excellent Herr Court-Musician Thoms of Munich. My friend Fleischhauer (Concert-Master at Meiningen) says he is ready to do what he can to recommend the use of the *Altgeige* at the approaching Dramatic Festival performances in Bayreuth. Consequently, I have the prospect of seeing at least two of these instruments used in my orchestra and am only sorry not to be able to employ six. * * * *

686. TO LUDWIG STRECKER (B. SCHOTT AND SONS), MAINZ

BAYREUTH, 30th March, 1876.

* * * * As regards the *American March*, of which a fair copy is just being carefully prepared for your compositors, I have to draw your attention to the following circumstance:

Some two months ago, Music-Director Thomas of New York inquired whether I would do such a composition for him and how much I would ask for making over to him the United States copyright, *plus* royalties on performances. He asked me, should we come to an agreement, not to issue the first German (European) edition until six months after the first performance in America. From Thomas's letter, which I enclose, you will see that copyright could not be secured in North America and that my composition has been bought purely to adorn the anniversary of some women's club. Now, you will know best how to enforce the copyright, which I hereby bestow on you, in Europe and wherever else you have rights, and I am sending you the work as soon as I get it from the copyist. Rubinstein will at once prepare a two- and four-handed pianoforte arrangement for you, having often played the march from the full score for the entertainment of my friends. * * *

687. TO THE ARTISTES TAKING PART IN THE DRAMATIC FESTIVAL ¹

BAYREUTH, 9th April, 1876.

* * * * Following my publication of a definite announcement of the performance of my Dramatic Festival in Bayreuth this year, I feel it is indispensable to make sure both of your co-operation and of your punctual attendance at rehearsals according to the timetable announced to you by a binding declaration on your part, for which you will find a form to be filled in and signed overleaf.

Will you also, please, let me have again clearly in writing the

¹ *An seine Künstler*, p. 178.

amount you feel it necessary to claim for expenses, and will you also remember that if this does not exceed the sum required last year there is no need for you to do anything further in this matter. On the other hand, I have good grounds to believe that you would ensure yourself a more generous indemnity for the sacrifices you are making on my behalf even *this* year, if you would promise me your assistance in the two proposed repetitions of the Dramatic Festival in 1877 and 1878. In that event you would only have to give me four weeks on each occasion, while I should be in a position to devote all the takings from the three performances to the performers and assistants after subtracting running-expenses only; for the initial expenses of production would not recur. * * * *

688. TO LUDWIG STRECKER (B. SCHOTT AND SONS), MAINZ

BAYREUTH, 30th April, 1876.

* * * * We are very glad to hear of your pleasure in the society of our very dear friend, Fräulein Mathilde Maier; she is a most rare and exceptional creature, whose acquaintance I first made through Frau B. Schott.¹ * * * *

689. TO HERMANN LEVI, MUNICH ■

BAYREUTH, 18th May, 1876.

* * * * It has certainly not escaped my notice that Mme. Schefsky is not an entirely "finished product," but, after all, I am obliged to trust that nearly all my singers will allow me to instruct them in a great many matters of which they previously knew nothing. The basis of everything is the most painstaking accuracy, particularly in rhythm. I demand (from *Tannhäuser* onwards) that my singers shall put "recitative" entirely out of their minds and learn to sing my notes in strict time down to the most minute fraction of their melodic value as the only means of arriving at an understanding of the way I intend they should be sung. Well, you know all about that. * * * *

690. TO JULIUS HEY, MUNICH ³

BAYREUTH, 10th June, 1876.

* * It is high time I wrote to you! First of all, my sincerest thanks for your protracted efforts with Unger. The good results are quite striking. I find that his voice has become very much more

¹ Wagner's numerous letters to this lady are still unpublished. Unfortunately, many passages in them have been rendered illegible, as I am told by Geheimrat Dr. Strecker of Mainz, a friend of hers.

² *An seine Künstler*, p. 193.

³ Hey's *Richard Wagner als Vortragsmeister*, Leipzig, 1911.

true, and that accurate study of all and sundry has stood him in good stead. After a careful study of the organic peculiarities of his voice, however (peculiarities which proclaim themselves, even when he speaks, as a natural constriction of the throat), I have decided that he must always sing with the full power of his voice, as then the fatal palatal sound disappears from high notes and low, but particularly from the latter. On this system he must rely on warmth of emotional expression (a certain vibrant veiling of the tone) to get his gentler effects, but this will only emphasise the whole character of Siegfried, from whom nothing is more alien than lyrical sweetness, and who is distinguished by daemonic high spirits and impetuous self-confidence.—* * * *

691. TO FRIEDRICH FEUSTEL, BAYREUTH

SORRENTO, 7th October, 1876.

* * * * I am thinking of asking for my friends' advice as to whether I should apply to the Emperor to cover any deficit. A single bold attack would make it clear whether my labours are to be rewarded merely by the distribution of Orders to the participants or whether they are to be directly recognised in the only way I could acknowledge *as* recognition, namely, by the covering of expenses, which most certainly ought not to become a burden upon *me*. Also, this might perhaps pave the way towards bringing my petition for future support for the Bayreuth Dramatic Festival before the Imperial Council as an Imperial Government measure. Fortunately, it only needs a certain amount of time to clear this matter up, and time we still have, as the business has not to be finally settled till November.

I received a very fine letter from the King in Venice. He exhorts me to patience and perseverance, and he will put my affairs before everything else.

Consequently, I hope to see everything wound up before the end of this year, and at the New Year to be able to begin preparing for a repetition of the Festival. This last costs me great self-denial for, particularly if I get the necessary recognition and support, I shall feel bound to take a very strenuous and active part in correcting the performances of my personnel, and I have little spirit or inclination for that at present.—* * * *

692. TO THE SAME

ROME, 23rd November, 1876.

* * Since leaving Bayreuth I have heard nothing from you beyond the announcement that the deficit is proving more and more

serious and that you want me to suggest some means of meeting it. The first thing to be done seemed to me to be to make application to those who have supported my enterprise hitherto. I drew up a letter and sent it off to you (about the 8th or 10th of October) with a request that you would enclose the same with your report to our patrons. At the same time, however, I wrote very fully to the King of Bavaria, sketching out a plan whereby the theatre with all its accessories should become the property of the State under the management of the magistracy of Bayreuth on condition that the whole burden of debt resting upon it were taken over by this authority. I have received no reply to this proposition as yet, but I do not doubt the King's very good intentions and imagine that he may, nevertheless, experience some difficulty in discovering the right way to meet my wishes.

Although I am awaiting replies in all quarters, our friend Heckel has written of his great regret that I have personally to ask for contributions to cover the deficit, adding that in his opinion this should have been my friends' affair. Accordingly he has himself broached the subject to our friends on the committee of management. I replied that the feelings which actuated him appeared to me very right, and that I should indeed be very pleased if my friends would take the matter in hand. As regards his proposal for making good the deficit by giving a fourth (extra) performance with increased charges, I could only express the doubt as to whether payments could be deferred long enough to allow of this.

I am firmly convinced that there are people who could and would very gladly subscribe the sum we need, but I do not know the man of sufficient means to take a lead in this matter. * * *

* * * Whatever happens, however, it seems to me too late to think with confidence of a repetition of the Dramatic Festival next summer, or indeed at all. I was able to face all this financial confusion and trouble to attain my goal *once* and show the world the true meaning of my work, but to go on in this condition, to be forever at the mercy of chance, of the ills, for example, consequent on a libellous press, to be exposed to financial anxieties which I do not deserve since I seek no pecuniary gains—all this I must refuse to submit to for the future. Very considerable defects in the performance of my work have been due solely to financial uncertainty and the resultant doubts of those responsible as to whether performance would actually take place at the date fixed. We ought by now to have command of funds for improvements and renovations. Furthermore, I should not care to ask certain artistes in my personnel, who have proved "difficult," to co-operate again without promising

them a very considerable honorarium, and to do so it would be necessary, at the very least, to have made good the deficit on this year's production. And to ask my singers and musicians to assist at a fourth (extra) performance to this end might very well scare them off, for it looks like tempting Providence to count even on a repetition of the fortunate conditions which before made it possible to give three uninterrupted performances in succession and within so short a space of time.

Therefore it seems to me that I am forced to decide to wait and see whether anything can be done timely to raise money to cover the deficit. If this has not been done by January 1st, the repetition of the Dramatic Festival next year will have to be dropped, and it will remain to be seen then whether inquiries are made and help afforded in the proper quarters.

*** I must not ** lose sight of the possibility that we may never repeat the performance of the Dramatic Festival; this would certainly be the case if the deficit were not covered in time by contributions and it became impossible to suspend payment any longer. There will be nothing for it then but to get the undertaking declared bankrupt and hand over the assets to the creditors, after informing our patrons. We should have to give the King of Bavaria what belongs to him, and offer the remaining valuables to the highest bidder to pay the other debts. ***

*** I have shown what I can do, and now feel that I have a right—as indeed I am compelled—to close my public career as an artist. My sole remaining duty is to care diligently for my own and my family's welfare, hitherto sacrificed to that career. ***

693. TO LUDWIG STRECKER (B. SCHOTT AND SONS), MAINZ

ROME, 23rd November, 1876.

**** I wish very earnestly to recommend to you for publication two quintets (a pianoforte and a string quartet) by Signor Sgambati (of Rome). Liszt having previously drawn my attention to this composer and exceptionally talented pianist, I have now had the very real pleasure of discovering a truly great and original talent which, since it is somewhat out of place in Rome (?!), I would gladly introduce to the greater musical world. On my advice he is to go very shortly to Vienna, and thence to travel throughout Germany playing his own compositions. I promise myself excellent results therefrom, after the dullness of modern German chamber-music (even Brahms', etc.). For the present I recommend you, as I have said, the two quintets which I have had played to me a

number of times. Please take them up with all speed ¹ and encourage this very fine musician by offering a moderate honorarium. If you are disinclined to do so I shall look elsewhere. * * *

694. TO FRANZ BETZ, BERLIN ²

ROME, 30th November, 1876.

* * To-day I am asking both yourself and Niemann a question, and the possibility of repeating the performances in Bayreuth depends first and foremost on your answers. Will you spare me another six weeks or so next summer? I for my part am prepared to undertake these performances only if I am able to promise you a very considerable sum for expenses, the amount to be settled by yourself.

To my very lasting and painful regret, you were the only one who went away without taking leave of me! For the second time you deprived me of the long-desired moment in which I had promised myself the pure satisfaction of telling you, frankly and openly, of recognition and gratitude such as I have owed to few others in the course of my life. The first time was at the banquet after the first performance, when I proposed to take as the subject of my speech the peculiar character of German art and of its disciples, their energy, their industry, their consuming devotion to their task, through which the most brilliant achievements of other nations may be surpassed, and to take the liberty of adducing *you* and your performance as Wotan as an example of all this. On that occasion my artistes left me in the lurch, and I had to talk only of matters concerning our patrons. I hoped for a parting word with you. How unkindly you cheated me of it!

Believe me, this to me unaccountable behaviour is the real sting in the sense of worry which I bear about with me to this day! God knows what was in your mind. Let it remain unexplained, unless I can clear up some misunderstanding or other on your part. But one good action would dispel all the clouds. Meet me in this—and I shall see everything in a better and pleasanter light again!

Try to wriggle out of it as you may, you *shall* hear me tell you one thing here and now, namely that our *Mastersingers* was the best thing I have ever produced on the stage. Your Hans Sachs was to me incomparable and unforgettable—your Mark was perfect—your Wotan *amazing*. I have to use the term over and over again.

¹ The publisher accepted them and also Sgambati's later works, of which the *Requiem* is notable.

² *An seine Künstler*, p. 209.



ALBERT NIEMANN, 1877

*From a photograph in the Stadtgeschichtliches
Museum, Leipzig*

No performance I have ever seen compares with yours in the second act of *The Valkyrie*—even taking into account the unprecedented difficulties caused by its sheer length and range. Let this be established between us, even if you should set out to forget me. * * *

695. TO ALBERT NIEMANN, BERLIN

ROME, 30th November, 1876.

* * * * As you advised me I went at once to Italy and am now in Rome. Do you imagine that I got even *one* day's rest and recreation? This has never been granted me. All my worries follow me, the eternal anxiety about the deficit. Even if I put the material cares of my enterprise out of mind, *you* will understand me if, after all the extraordinary heart-stirring zeal which these performances called into being, I regard all our efforts as little more than waste of strength, aimless and useless.

How constantly I was obliged to observe your deep dissatisfaction! I opposed your expressions of it, because I could not agree with you that this or that redistribution of parts would have settled matters. You forgot that only you—you alone—were the genius of the performance, and that all the rest could only find place in it by their industry and noble intentions. In this last respect Betz's achievement was the most extraordinary, so that I really came to honour him. How sad that he appears to have lost his noble intentions now!—

But you can say all this to yourself better than I can! It would be a fine thing to have a repetition, which would now put many wrong things right, and to present the whole work once more in greatest possible purity. I must let this depend wholly on your will and on your influence over Betz.

Tell me yes or no speedily! But be ever assured that those fine moments in which a sense of unconstrained comradeship passed between us are among my most valued recollections. * * * *

696. TO EMIL HECKEL, MANNHEIM

FLORENCE, 9th December, 1876.

* * That you, too, can find it in your heart to take no further account of me and of my situation and to speak to me of the matter merely in the way my other friends do, is a great grief to me. No one can devise means of help; even my applications to our patrons are to be dispatched "with caution," because times are so bad, and yet a repetition of the performances is to be announced as soon as possible! It is incredible! You actually ask me about the

Festival medal, which I naturally countermanded at once when I was told of the constantly mounting deficit. What people expect of me!—Well, I can tell you now quite definitely that I shall spend the whole of the coming summer in restoring my health, if possible. On account of my increasing abdominal troubles, I think I shall go in for a prolonged water-cure in Marienbad and elsewhere. Should I find my health re-established, we will see what are the prospects for the year after next. If the deficit has not been covered in the meantime—and that without further efforts on my own part—I am considering handing over the whole theatre to some manager or other, perhaps to the Munich Court Theatre, and I personally shall never trouble myself about it again.

This, my dear friend, is where my powers give out. What I have accomplished so far was in the nature of a question to the German public, “Do you want this?” Now I take it that people do *not* want it and that ends it for me.

Please let this explanation of the situation suffice henceforward and, if you think good, enlighten my other friends about me just as summarily—since they seem incapable of understanding me.

I am attempting to cheer myself through one of my absolutely sleepless nights by stating my mind accurately and definitely to a true and sympathetic friend, such as I have always known you to be.

Remain my friend! * * *

697. TO THE SAME

BAYREUTH, 11th February, 1877.

* * Oh, yes! The King of Bavaria!! As if *I* needed prompting to be more diligent in that quarter!—Do you not believe that, if anyone could do anything there, I am the person, and do you suppose that I have not done my *very* best! Please let us say no more about this!—

Surely you must have seen, best of friends, that all my present enterprises have been designed simply to protect the honour of my enterprise and of my standing? You cannot believe that I really hope to accomplish anything? Learn to know Germany and the German public! There all, all is lost!—Believe me!

Our achievement last year was a miracle and will remain one as long as anyone remembers it. But we cannot go beyond it—we are forced to see that.

It is clear already that performances will be impossible this year, both on spiritual and on material grounds; not even unlimited

funds would suffice, for the non-material difficulties are particularly great. * * *

In the meantime I have to consider how to make good the deficit. I am thinking of giving concerts in England for a few months, simply for this purpose. If I come back whole and sound, no one, I hope, will ask me to think of anything but of—recovering—and forgetting! This is what we have come to!—* * *

698. TO LUDWIG STRECKER (B. SCHOTT AND SONS), MAINZ

BAYREUTH, 28th March, 1877.

* * * * I do not propose ever again to produce *The Ring of the Nibelungs* in Bayreuth on my own responsibility and under my own business management. I have no longer the inclination or the strength to do so.—

Under these circumstances I am considering afresh an offer made me at the close of the Dramatic Festival by Dr. Förster, director of the Leipzig Theatre. He wishes to procure for *my native city* the honour of a first perfect production of my Dramatic Festival. His earnestness, his zeal and his appreciation incline me to give him preference over the authorities at our Court Theatre, and I might even go so far as to put under his management a revival of the Dramatic Festival in Bayreuth itself. In the course of a year he wishes to produce all four pieces in Leipzig. * * * *

699. TO FRIEDRICH FEUSTEL, BAYREUTH

LONDON, 13th May, 1877.

* * I probably need not repeat what I told friend Adolf [Gross] about the state of my affairs here. If, despite my accurate estimate of the things which always held me back from trying my luck in London, I could yet entertain the idea that after all such an attempt might succeed just this once, it was, nevertheless, not so much this idea and the hopes based upon it that decided me to go to London, as the determination to show you, and other friends of a like persuasion, that it was not indolence and love of comfort on my part which made me wish that other means should be found of making good the deficit. It is time now to take other measures without delay, and accordingly I ask you to be so kind as to issue at once, in the name of the committee of the Dramatic Festival, an appeal for the subscription of contributions to cover the deficit. * * * *

If this method, too, should fail, I am determined to accept Ullmann's American offer, to put my property in Bayreuth up for sale,

to cross the sea with my whole family and never again to return to Germany.—

As to affairs here, we are still afraid that we shall not make enough to cover expenses. I should be glad if you would keep back the advances I make to the singers through you. In any case, I should be very much obliged to you if you will credit me with money here so that I can go quietly to Ems at the beginning of July. Whether I shall recover there to some extent will largely depend on whether I get reassuring news about the opening and progress of the subscription. * * * *

700. TO KING LUDWIG II. OF BAVARIA, MUNICH ¹

LONDON, 23rd May, 1877.

MY MOST GRACIOUS MASTER AND FRIEND!

I hope you will not be angry with me if I send you in but a very few lines my warmest thanks for your most kind remembrance of my birthday yesterday. I stood in need of the consolation given me by the kindest of friends, for at present I languish in a state of exhaustion for which I must soon find some drastic remedy, if I am not to succumb altogether. My fortune here has been—as everywhere throughout my career, and as in Bayreuth a year ago—unprecedented success—but a disproportionate outlay. This recent London venture has completely failed of its object, largely because of the ill-advised handling of the same. My illustrious friend may picture for himself the emotions with which I withdraw from my recent exertions, when my one desire was to escape anxiety for last year's deficit if only for the coming month, which I hope to spend in taking the cure at Ems!

During the last months I spent in Bayreuth, hoping that the London enterprise would secure a favourable turn in affairs, I was possessed by a mood similar to that following Schnorr's death and in the anxious Munich days, and so I called *Parsifal* ² to mind, drew it out and finished the whole poem—which helped me to forget my situation to some extent. I have not yet found time to make a fair copy of it for my King, but I hope at least to be able to get my wife to do it while we are in Ems. You will, I hope, soon receive the poem which I really intended to reserve for your Royal Highness's birthday. * * * *

¹ Röckl, p. 170. See No. 610, note 2, p. 218.

² After 13 February, 1877, Wagner always used this spelling (instead of *Parzival*) of the word meaning the Pure (Innocent) Fool (philologically not unobectionable and to be traced to Görres' introduction to *Lohengrin*).

701. TO FRIEDRICH FEUSTEL, BAYREUTH

EMS, 14th June, 1877.

DEAREST FRIEND!

Here are the two paragraphs.

I hope that these invasions of the privacy of my family will at least be useful in giving me time to learn quietly what my surroundings are and with what sort of people I have had to deal all my life long. One thing is plain, I think, and I shall never lose sight of it, namely that it is not my work which is condemned but Bayreuth. My work will be performed everywhere and draw vast audiences but—they will not come to Bayreuth again. This is the true inwardness of the matter and the reason for the growing coldness towards my enterprise. I can only blame the place in so far as I chose it. Yet my idea was a great one. I wanted, with the support of the nation, to create something entirely new and original in a place to which that creation should first bring fame—a kind of art Washington. I thought better of our upper classes than they deserved. For my sake (and a little out of curiosity) people put up for once with the immense inconveniences of Bayreuth, but they shrink from the idea of a repetition. Also that is the main reason for the unsympathetic attitude to my position.—A very prominent London firm have suggested that I should move all my Bayreuth stage properties, etc., to a big London theatre and give a series of performances throughout the coming season. If I really wished it, I could subsequently get a theatre built in Leipzig and carry on there. Würzburg or Nuremberg would, after last year's great success, have had the money to cover my expenses and continue the performances. But Bayreuth could only be a success now if my idea of a musical-dramatic high school, as recently sketched out, were to be realised, resulting in a considerable settlement of artistes there. The town itself, many of whose inhabitants at any rate would benefit from such an institution, might, after all, address a petition to the King, to the Estates, etc. For my own part, all I shall probably be able to do is to harass myself about covering the deficit and disposing of the theatre! * * * *

702. TO LORENZ VON DÜFFLIPP, MUNICH ¹

EMS, 24th June, 1877.

* * May I beg you most respectfully to present His Majesty the King with the enclosed very dutiful document and the accompanying MS. of my latest poem? In respect of the manuscript, I am somewhat apprehensive that the fair copy of the original

¹ Röckl, p. 170. See No. 610, note 2, p. 218.

which my dear wife has made may, despite great clearness, prove too small for His Majesty's convenient perusal; in that case a further copy may be necessary, which I would beg you to put into the hands of some very discreet and reliable person. In the hope of bringing the questions anent the transfer of my Bayreuth Dramatic Festival performances and allied matters to a definite conclusion by personal discussion and negotiations, I have decided to spend the third week of next month (July) in Munich and to devote the whole of that week exclusively to discharging these affairs. Will you be so very kind as to let me know whether I shall be welcome at this time, and whether I shall be able to meet the necessary parties to the discussion?

This will be my last attempt to bring my inexpressibly great exertions to some satisfactory issue, satisfactory, that is, in respect of the business itself, even though hardly so to me. * * * The question then will be * * how far His Majesty may be pleased to support that conception of a wider national culture embodied in my Bayreuth enterprise. As I am dependent in a very special sense on an act of "grace," the effective power of this grace must not be forestalled in any quarter, and accordingly I make it my duty to wait in patience till the time appointed for the royal decision to be intimated. * * * *

703. TO KARL FRIEDRICH GLASENAPP, RIGA¹

EMS, 25th June, 1877.

* * Accept my thanks for the work² you have now completed! You will no doubt realise how very much we have been moved both by the intention and by the execution of this work. Briefly, I have found less to criticise in the occasional (unavoidable) inexactitude, or even obscurity, in your presentation and arrangement of facts, than in your having been compelled to report so much on hearsay from others (very frequently in their own words and at far too great length), whose accounts compare very unfavourably with your own descriptions taken from personal experience and knowledge. Nohl and his associates, for instance, often give themselves extravagant licence and allow themselves to be far too witty, particularly in describing my person, my words and conversation. I may well feel disgusted, for I often see a most puerile and absurd image of myself in the mirror they hold up.

I would prefer the English translation to be made from a somewhat compressed original. Also you might easily incorporate in

¹ *An Freunde*, p. 574.

² The Master's biography in 2 vols., increased in later editions to 6 vols.

Red Eins.
2 Juli 77.

Werthebster Freund!

Ich wurde soeben Ihren Brief nachmals
gelesen, nicht ungeheuerlich um ihn zu beantworten,
sondern um Ihnen etwas darauf zu sagen.

Ich bin ein Schluße einer sogenannten Kunst,
von welcher — als solider — ich gar nicht gerade
viel ansehe; dennoch habe ich in Aussicht auf
die Rückkehr zu nehmen, dass ich mich in keiner
Weise ausschließlich ansehe.

Dennoch übergehe ich, was ich alles in mir
durchgemacht habe, seitdem ich erfahren musste,
dass kein Aufputz oder Anruf meinerseits es
dahin brachte, auch nur die mindeste Regelung
des vorjährigen Festspiel-Defizits von mir abzuwarten
irgendwas herauszuheben. Ich sage jetzt nicht
dieser Last, habe mir mal bei der Vollendung
daran gegeben, und — bin liegen und erheben
ermittelten Gleichgültigkeit gegen alles sogenannte
Pabonal — oder Verhältniss erfüllt worden.

Ich gedachte noch in diesem Monate dem Aufputz
Versuch zu machen, die ganze Angelegenheit dem
Münchener Hoftheater aufzugeben, um dann
— vorläufig — an die Theaterleitung (in meinem
Tun) gar nicht mehr denken zu dürfen. —

Gelohnt und nichts, so geht es nach Limes, das
sage ich meine Tochter und — denke an nichts
weiter als an eine Rückkehr nach Deutschland. —

Kommt es nicht zum Aussehen, so gedachte ich
jedoch, meine letzte Lebenszeit — das mich einmal
und nicht anders möglich ist — für die Durchführung
meiner Idee nützlich zu machen. Ich werde denn
auf das allerbestmögliche Grunde, meinen
Aufenthalt in Bayern zu verlängern, um
Münchenern und bayerischen Sängern
zu verschaffen suchen. Mein vorläufiger
Plan ist so gemacht, dass er mir sehr einfach
sein kann. Ich habe dazu vier Gehilfen nötig,
welche vollständig bezahlt werden müssen.
Dieses zu sorgen, ist meine nächste Ange-
legenheit. Die drei der Eine der Vier. Meine
Schule könnte schon mit diesen spallendster-
öffnet werden. Denken Sie daran, dass die
Vollendung nicht allzuweit — von mir zum
Uebereinstimmung nach Bayern veranlasst
werden dürfen.

Wie viel gebrauchen Sie mir — für jetzt noch
nicht — aufzukommen?

(Alles dies: unter uns! versteht sich.)
Am 5. d. M. werde ich hier fort, bin bis
15. Sept. (Carlsbad) und (Limes),
dann München, München-Hotel. —

Beide grüße von Ihnen

herzlich ergebener

Richard Wagner

705. TO HANS VON WOLZOGEN, POTSDAM ¹

BAD EMS, 2nd July, 1877.

* * * * I will therefore pass over all that I have thought and felt since I made the discovery that no appeal on my part could arouse the slightest impulse in any quarter to relieve me of the burden of the deficit on last year's Dramatic Festival. I am struggling yet under this burden, I have laid out my last halfpenny on it, and—am filled with an immeasurable indifference towards all so-called patronage and co-operative action.

I propose to make a final attempt this month to get the Munich Court Theatre to take over the whole business and then—for the present—to think no more of "Dramatic Festivals" (in *my* sense of the word).—

If I am not successful I shall go to America and provide for my family—and never dream of returning to Germany.²—

Should the worst not come to the worst, however, I propose to spend my last years in doing what I can to carry through my idea (indeed it is impossible for me to do otherwise). I shall attempt, on the most modest foundations, to employ my time in Bayreuth in training conductors and dramatic singers. My preliminary plans are so practical that they cannot but be simple. I shall need four assistants who will get very scanty pay. My next business is to find them. You are one of the four. My school might be opened as early as the late autumn of this year. Remember that I may ask you to remove to Bayreuth³—perhaps at no very distant date. * * * *

706. TO EMIL HECKEL, MANNHEIM

BAYREUTH, 1st October, 1877.

** Seidl tells me that he is not entering his application for Mannheim. He is doing the right thing and it lifts a weight from my heart, for though he is gifted he has no experience at all.

I can now recommend Fischer to you all the more strongly. After assuring me that they would appoint him music-director they only made him trainer of the chorus, which has offended me! Fischer is thoroughly experienced, is versed in repertory and is reliable through and through. I can answer for him!—Please tell him of my recommendation and offer him the post of music-director,⁴ to be shared with Langer. * * *

¹ *An seine Künstler*, p. 379 (see accompanying facsimile of the whole letter).

² See Nos. 699, 718, 721.

³ This occurred very shortly. Wolzogen undertook the editing of *Bayreuther Blätter*.

⁴ Franz Fischer remained in Mannheim till 1879 when he went to the Munich Opera House.



RICHARD WAGNER, 1877

From H. S. Chamberlain, "Richard Wagner," published by Messrs. Friedrich Bruckmann, Munich

707. TO LUDWIG STRECKER (B. SCHOTT AND SONS), MAINZ

BAYREUTH, 24th November, 1877.

* * In what form do you intend to publish the poem of *Parsifal* in the first instance? Much as I like the latin type, I fear its unpopularity (in the publishers' interest more especially). So, if it is to be German lettering, let it be big and of good quality, please! Textual exactitude is of great moment to me. You might take the libretto of *The Mastersingers* as a model in the matter of different founts of type for stage directions, etc. * * *

* * * You have the *Siegfried Idyll*. The title and dedication will follow directly!—* * *

708. TO HERMANN ZUMPE, SALZBURG

BAYREUTH, 4th December, 1877.

DEAR FRIEND!

Tell me *in what quarter* you want me to recommend you and I will do it! Bülow is appointed in Hanover. I know of no other posts. All these intendants are personally antipathetic to me. I cannot create posts for anyone. I tried to do it for Fischer in Munich, and they treated him so ill that he could not stay, whereas things turned out well for him in Mannheim—why?—because Heckel had influence there.

Really, it only hurts me when people imagine I do not wish to help them. I am quite out of touch with the theatres. What next? Patience! I had no better luck myself! * * *

709. TO KARL ECKERT, BERLIN

BAYREUTH, 28th December, 1877.

* * * * Furthermore, I am deeply averse at present to any enterprise, let it call itself what it will. I shall take care of myself a little, and content myself modestly by doing some composition for *Parsifal*. * * *

710. TO FRIEDRICH FEUSTEL, BAYREUTH

BAYREUTH, 3rd February, 1878.

* * * * For to-day * * I must tell you of my gratitude for the remarkable patience, skill and energy which you have brought to bear on my unfortunate position in respect of the Dramatic Festival deficit, and also inform you that to my great joy—through the King's noble friendship to me—your efforts have led to a satisfactory issue. This turn of affairs pleases me because—basically

—it is the expected results of my own works, which are now to give us means to combat the evil material consequences of 1876. That is creditable. Yet I owe it solely to your faith in the ultimate issue, that the King's kindly action can bring us real and prompt deliverance from our trying situation. * * * *

711. TO FRANZ OVERBECK, BASLE ¹

BAYREUTH, 24th May, 1878.

* * * * From your brief intimations I take it that our old friend Nietzsche has been holding aloof from you also. There is no doubt that very striking changes have taken place in him. But those who used to observe him years ago in his mental fits can only tell themselves that a certain catastrophe, long dreaded, has now set in, not altogether unexpectedly. I have preserved enough friendship for him *not* to read his book ² (after glancing through the pages as I cut them) and I can only wish and hope that some day he will thank me for this. * * *

712. TO ANGELO NEUMANN, LEIPZIG

BAYREUTH, 28th September, 1878.

* * I have just learned that you have declared it impossible to engage Herr Seidl for your opera. I beg you, notwithstanding, to make it possible. In this I am thinking less of Herr Seidl (for whom I can at this moment find a good post) than of the Leipzig performances of my operas and—I know what I am about. There is not a single conductor who knows my tempi and the relation of the music to the action. But I have instructed Seidl.³ He could also conduct *The Nibelungs* for you better than anyone else. If these words of mine are not enough to influence you, I shall have no more recommendations to make to you in future.

(God grant that Unger lasts out for you! I heard a bad account of him in London!) * * * *

713. TO HEINRICH PORGES, MUNICH

BAYREUTH, 11th December, 1878.

* * * Will you please relinquish any musical manuscripts of mine you may possess in view of my wife's enthusiasm? At the time of my desperate departure from Vienna, I gave you (and also Tausig and Cornelius—if I am not mistaken?) manuscripts which I thought

¹ *An Freunde*, p. 579.

² *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* (Leipzig, 1876).

³ Neumann did not engage Seidl at the time out of regard for Sucher. See No. 715.

burdensome and unnecessary. To you (?) I gave the rough draft of the composition of *Love Forbidden*. Be magnanimous and do not interpret the despairing act of that moment as a premeditated transaction conferring possibly profitable rights on you. Although those were terrible days, my memory of them also embraces recollections of the truest and most devoted friendship, for you, my dear Heinrich, are among them. Now that sorrow has given place to utterly unlooked-for bliss, I feel so immeasurably indebted to the bringer of this bliss that I can boldly ask the friends who suffered with me then to do homage to *her*, even at real cost to themselves. * * *

* * * You must work more with me, and that as a musician, for we have philosophers enough. I will soon tell you what you have to do. * * *

714. TO ELSA UHLIG, DRESDEN ¹

BAYREUTH, 12th December, 1878.

* * You have responded in a most touching and gratifying manner to my wife's efforts to collect scattered manuscripts by surrendering to us so kindly the manuscript of my paper on *Opera and Drama*, once dedicated by me to your father, that true and devoted friend who was so early taken from us. You also added the originals of certain exceedingly confidential letters to my deceased friend. In exchange you would like a memento of me. I have chosen for the purpose a silver laurel wreath, given to me some time ago ² by Munich friends, and which I should now like to dedicate to the memory of the friend who died so young.

I could indeed have wished that you would (at my expense, of course) present me with a copy, certified by yourself, of the numerous letters to your late father, the originals of which you would like to keep in honour of his memory. These letters are no doubt of great value to you as establishing the great importance of your father's relations with me at one time, and yet their contents are no less valuable to my own successors, who may also have to study this relationship some day. For the same reason I should also have valued the return of my transcript of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*. The bestowal of my relics on my friends was an expression of my almost passionate care for their survival at a time when I was alone and childless in the world. Fate has now given me a family and a hopeful son to succeed me. When I leave the world I shall leave no one behind me with such a warm interest in every moment of my life and work as this same son. He alone, from his

¹ *An Freunde*, p. 580.

² After the first performance of *Tristan and Isolde*.

knowledge of the rest of my life, will understand the exact circumstances of the composition of that copy of Beethoven's work and in his hands it will have a living significance, whereas for you and your successors it can only be a curio, perhaps historically valuable. I beg you to return this transcript for my son.

Although penury has been hitherto bitter to me, partly because it rendered me incapable of helping my friends, now that I sell my work for money things are easier. I am now at last in a position to help you to some extent should you be in need.¹ Will you let me know if I can? * * *

715. TO EMIL HECKEL, MANNHEIM

BAYREUTH, 28th April, 1879.

* * At last I come to the point of sending you my congratulations on your splendid achievement, as well as expressing my own heart-felt delight in the success of your performances. Till now I could not tear myself away from my final work on the composition of *Parsifal*. That is now finished and you are the first to whom I turn in the world outside.

You in Mannheim have given a *very* instructive example of what can be done by real good will. As I have been obliged to abandon repetitions of the Bayreuth performances, it is only through very careful reproduction on our ordinary public stage that my work (if it is not to be wholly lost and forgotten) can prove that it at least *retains* vitality and interest. Having set about your self-chosen task with anxious care, comparing the resources of your theatre with those of the very foremost Court theatres, you determined to proceed on my maxim, that is, to grasp the problem intellectually. A carefully initiated, able, vigorous and, above all, *convinced* conductor—such an one is my guarantee for all the rest. Glad as I am of the public applause of Fischer, it has not in the least surprised me. I *knew* what he would achieve. Well, it was very fortunate for me that after finding a few able and instructed conductors I should at last have found a theatrical manager to call one of them to office. Before then my recommendations had always been disadvantageous to my candidates. Our Court Theatre intendants, etc., hate nothing so much as a so-called "Wagnerian," and cry "Lord preserve us! We should get a man who wants endless rehearsals, particularly when things are not going well, and who refuses to make a 'cut' anywhere, although things always go better when they are quite unintelligible. No, thank you! I get on best with

¹ After Uhlig's death his family had great difficulty in making ends meet.

servile bunglers!" Well, this time things were better in Mannheim. I hope too that it will do the Leipzig performances good that the management there have willingly chosen a man I recommended, a comrade of Fischer's in the Bayreuth performances [Seidl]. Add to that, with our young Brandt, it might be hoped and supposed that the whole administration (to whom I am, indeed, bound in gratitude) would be swept along in the right direction. Under such conditions singers and musicians work miracles. I know by experience. But—the chief miracle is that Heckel is a theatrical manager! Good luck! Now I understand the workings of Fate! * * *

716. TO LILLI LEHMANN, BERLIN ¹

BAYREUTH, 21st May, 1879.

O MY BEST OF ALL LILLIS! * * *

The next move with *Parsifal* is still costing me some consideration. The composition is finished, and anyone who comes to Bayreuth can hear it played through from beginning to end by Rubinstein. But—as I say—a little further consideration!

But my Kapellmeisteress Lilli must first see what her task is to be in the matter—devil's tricks which would never have occurred to me if her genius had not been ever present to my mind! Without Lilli, Klingsor's magic can never be accomplished. Oh—*there* is something to sing! If she would come, she could see it and judge the whole matter. For she must stand to me for all the others!—But I cannot send the thing away out of my house yet. What malign star might not blight such a manuscript!—

Well, then—we shall work together again after all! * * *

717. TO ANGELO NEUMANN, LEIPZIG

BAYREUTH, 10th October, 1879.

* * I bring you a fresh recommendation, as much in the interests of the person I am recommending as in those of the Leipzig Opera. When there is a musical conductor's post vacant beside Seidl, may I ask you very urgently to appoint to the post Herr Mottl of Vienna, an extraordinarily talented young man? He is the last whom I can recommend—I know of no others. His capacity and skill are quite unusual and I have come to know them very accurately by experience. I should be really glad to know that your opera was conducted by two such particularly excellent, active and, in their way, amiably efficient musicians.²—* * *

¹ *An seine Künstler.*

² Nikisch, however, worked with Seidl. Mottl was appointed as third kapellmeister, but shortly afterwards took first place at Karlsruhe.

718. TO FRIEDRICH FEUSTEL, BAYREUTH

NAPLES, 4th March, 1880.

* * * * My own life during the past year seems to me to have been shrouded in darkness. The almost unbroken grey skies which have loomed above my country have left a deep impression both on my health and on my mind. Had I not possessed a priceless consolation in my dear family and in the society of few but rare friends, I cannot conceive any reason why I should have gone on keeping myself alive.

I am utterly hopeless about Germany and its condition, and this will tell you much, for at the time when I entered open-eyed upon the course I had decided on, I wrote on my banner, "Stand or fall with Germany!"

It is only for the climate's sake, then, that I make this luxurious stay in Italy. Even this incredible Naples, with all that lives and moves in it, is for me only a play to distract me and bring forgetfulness. And it cannot really even assist me in that, for the whole wretchedness of our civilisation is constantly obtruding itself upon me afresh in a thousand sights of misery, brutality and vice.

Moreover, day by day my anxiety grows, and I begin to despair of being able to meet the expenses necessary for my well-being out of the money coming in to me. While I must already lay claim to your help in this matter, I * * have constantly to consider how else I * * am to subsist under the heavy demands made by my needs. I have, accordingly, recently been considering afresh,¹ and very seriously, the idea of a journey to America, and have been estimating my powers of endurance. Truth to tell, what has always frightened me away from this idea hitherto is the thought of letting myself be dragged round in America by some speculator merely in search of money, and—in the best event—finally returning with a small competence and beginning the old struggle afresh—yes, perhaps again sacrificing my money for an idea to which I believe I have sacrificed enough already, to learn at last how ill that idea accords with the conditions of life in Germany.

On the other hand, I must tell you in confidence that a notion of settling permanently in America with my family, my ideas and my works, is taking deep root in me. I can only regret that I did not long ago choose a fresh and vital soil for the future of my works and of my family, and my deep conviction of the decay of European culture makes me all the more determined now to take this way out. I am almost inclined to let the whole thing depend on the attitude of the Americans towards my offer.

¹ See Nos. 699, 705, 721.

For the present I must consider how to prolong my stay here, for my excellent physician here recommends very strongly the use of sea-bathing to restore my health completely, and I cannot begin this till June. This circumstance, though it presents many difficulties, pleases me well enough in one respect, in that it makes it possible for you and our dear friend Adolf [Gross] to visit us here presently. * * * *

719. TO FRIEDRICH SCHÖN, WORMS ¹

NAPLES, 28th June, 1880.

* * * In view of the hopes aroused in myself and in all our friends by your appearance, it seems to me that the only way of meeting your wishes is to attempt to reawaken the public interest (which in your opinion has not been aroused since the Dramatic Festival of 1876), by getting *Parsifal* produced as soon as practicable. I think this might be done in 1882 if I secure complete freedom from distractions till then, but only then (on the practical side) if I can claim the assistance of the King of Bavaria.

On a secure basis such as this, I propose, after *Parsifal*, to produce each year a pattern performance of each one of my earlier works (in order), as my artistic last will and testament to my friends. As I am now in my sixty-eighth year, I must look forward to a long and healthy old age if I am to carry out my plan, and I feel that I shall then have done enough to be excused from performances of *The Magic Flute*, *The Freischütz*, *Fidelio*, etc. Any information or teaching I may have to give I shall be glad to give privately if people will but come to visit me in Bayreuth. Even if these performances of my works prevent me from leaving behind me my "School," what, after all, have I to do with a "School"?——

720. TO KING LUDWIG II. OF BAVARIA, MUNICH ²

SIENA, 28th September, 1880.

I have now been obliged to surrender every one of my ideally conceived works to a public stage which I recognise as radically immoral, and I have to ask myself very seriously whether I am not to save at least this last and holiest of my works from a like fate—the career of a common opera. I can no longer ignore the decision in view of the very subject and content of my *Parsifal*. As a matter of actual fact, can and should a drama, plainly presenting on the stage the highest mysteries of the Christian faith, be performed

¹ *Bayreuther Briefe*, p. 296 (incomplete).

² *An Freunde*, p. 586 (lacking beginning and end).

in the course of an ordinary operatic repertory in theatres such as ours, and before a public such as ours? I really would not blame our Church authorities if they were to raise a very legitimate protest against the representation of the most sacred mysteries upon the very same boards on which, the day before and after, frivolity displays itself at its ease before a public which is only attracted by frivolity. With a very right sense of this, I called *Parsifal* a "Sacred Dramatic Festival." Therefore I must try to consecrate *one* stage to it, and this can only be at my unique Dramatic Festival Theatre in Bayreuth. There, and there alone, should *Parsifal* be performed for ever. Never shall *Parsifal* be offered in any other theatre for the "amusement" of the public. To make sure of this is the one thing that occupies me and drives me to seek for ways and means of securing this destiny for my work.

721. TO FRIEDRICH FEUSTEL, BAYREUTH

VENICE, 1st October, 1880.

* * * * Something—so I believe—will come of our Bayreuth after all. * * * To be brief: (1) I shall keep *Parsifal* wholly and exclusively for Bayreuth. Even the King will not claim it for Munich but will send me his choir and orchestra to Bayreuth every year for its performance. (2) There are to be annual performances, with entrance allowed to anybody (but at high prices!). (3) The patronage fund will serve as capital for the undertaking. As this fund increases by the takings each year it will serve to produce all my other works. I shall be obliged to relinquish all profits for myself, as I shall not even publish the score of *Parsifal*.

I must therefore look elsewhere for my own needs. Five months in North America¹ (September 1881 to April 1882) ought to give me an independent livelihood.

722. TO ANGELO NEUMANN, LEIPZIG

BAYREUTH, 23rd February, 1881.

* * I have no connection whatever with the present "Anti-Semitic" movement. An article² of mine about to appear in *Bayreuther Blätter* will state this in such a way that it should be impossible for *intelligent people* to identify me with that movement.

Yet my advice to you is—give up Berlin,³ and go to London in May and June. How you are to manage this is, of course, your affair. It would be a nice thing if your—and our—enterprise were

¹ This plan was abandoned. See No. 718.

² *Erkenne dich selbst* (Know Thyself) (*Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. x).

³ This proved unnecessary, however; see No. 724.

to be diverted from the true course by follies of the kind that now flourish in Berlin.

Our *Nibelungs* are surely not destined to be persecuted by both courtiers and Jews at once—and that on a sheer ridiculous misunderstanding. * * *

723. TO EDWARD DANNREUTHER, LONDON ¹

BAYREUTH, 1st April, 1881.

* * * I am now beginning preparations—for honour's sake—for the performance of *Parsifal*. We were unlucky with our English dragon,² and we must see whether we cannot do better with the Grail bells.

After discussing with experts the best way of representing the chimes, it was agreed that they were best imitated by *Chinese* gongs. Well then, in what market was the best choice in quantity and quality of these gongs to be found? In London, it is suggested. Good! Who will undertake the choice? Dannreuther, of course! Well, dearest friend, see if you can scrape together four gongs giving—as near as possible—the following peal:



Note that, to elicit a deep bell note, these instruments should be struck very *gently* on the rim, whereas if they are struck sharply in the middle they give a ringing and quite useless note. Well then, see what you can do!—* * * *

724. TO HERMANN LEVI, MUNICH ³

WAHNFRIED, 3rd June, 1881.

* * I have a moment's leisure in which to remember my friends. I should like to dedicate it to the good Vogls. Therefore may I ask you if you accorded the pair worthy honours on their return to Munich? They have exalted the fame of Munich above all the stars of the German theatrical world. They were the pillars of the daring Berlin venture and it could not have gone through without them. What Vogl has achieved could only be achieved, notwithstanding extraordinary talents, by a man of the greatest spiritual energy. I have come to value him very much. I want to ask you to be very proud of him and of his splendid wife and to show them every kindness in my name. * * *

¹ *An seine Künstler*, p. 322.

² The dragon constructed for *Siegfried* in 1876 was a complete failure.

³ *An seine Künstler*, p. 324.

725. TO LUDWIG STRECKER (B. SCHOTT AND SONS), MAINZ

BAYREUTH, 30th August, 1881.

* * * The difficulties which from my point of view stand in the way of the publication of the music of my latest work, *Parsifal*, and also the reasons adduced to persuade me to take special action in the matter, are now known to you. It remains now to indicate the simplest way to an agreement between us. * * *

My main object is to prevent any theatrical performance of *Parsifal* outside Bayreuth. * * *

A pianoforte arrangement of the first act is already finished and at your disposal for printing. The whole will be complete by the end of this year. We still need the full score to transcribe the parts, nevertheless up till the time of the performance (at latest) this too is entirely at your disposal.

I would set the price at one hundred thousand marks, plus the cancellation of all my remaining debts to you. * * *

Should you incline to think my terms excessive, will you please consider the example of the English publisher, who felt justified in paying Herr Gounod 100,000 francs for an oratorio¹! I feel that my last and, I believe, my best work may well compare favourably with that of the somewhat faded French *maestro*!—* * *

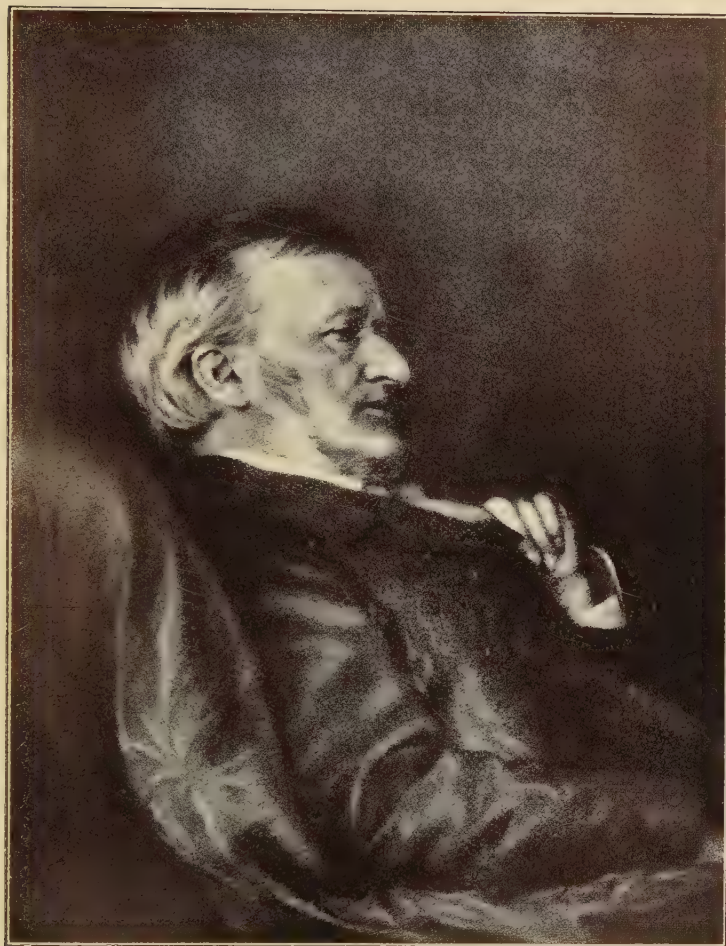
726. TO ANGELO NEUMANN, STAYING IN LONDON

BAYREUTH, 16th October, 1881.

* * *—I staked twenty years of my life to found Bayreuth, simply because I associated a very far-reaching idea with that project. A Wagner Theatre in Berlin? Nothing could have been easier for me; nine years ago they offered me the funds to establish it. But the idea I sought to bring into the world could not have come to birth there. No, but that which I created here in seclusion (where people had to come to me) could, when brought to light, eventually be propagated elsewhere. But this propagation must be another's work. If you would undertake to be that other, you would find that I trust you. But it must be entirely your own affair, and I can do no more for you than put my works in your hands with privileges not accorded to any other manager.

It is not my money you need, is it, but my name? As I give you my works, you may give the theatre my name, but not amongst, or even at the head of, a list of others who are interested in it. Berlin must be *your* enterprise, not mine. * * *

¹ *The Redemption*, Novello and Co., London.



RICHARD WAGNER. THE LAST PHOTOGRAPH

*From H. S. Chamberlain, "Richard Wagner," published by
Messrs. Friedrich Bruckmann, Munich*

My much-esteemed friend, if you cannot establish a purely (shall we call it?) "Wagnerian" theatre—a task which I think would be extremely difficult!—rather give up the project entirely.

Parsifal is to be performed nowhere but in Bayreuth, and this for ideal reasons which my illustrious benefactor the King of Bavaria (for instance) saw so clearly that he has quite given up the idea of repeating the Bayreuth performances, even at the Munich Theatre. In view of these precedents, how can I dispose of *Parsifal* as you suggest! I ought not and I cannot allow it to be performed at other theatres unless a true "Wagner Theatre" were to arise, a *sacred* theatre which, moving from place to place, should propagate throughout the world the thing that I have cultivated and brought to pure perfection at *my* theatre in Bayreuth.—

If we cling firmly to these ideas for your enterprise, a time may come when I can entrust *Parsifal* not to any court or civic theatre but to a travelling Wagner Theatre. * * *

727. TO THERESE MALTEN, DRESDEN ¹

PALERMO, 26th November, 1881.

* * The fine impression I gained of you recently through your performance as Senta in *The Flying Dutchman* has grown upon me, so that I must tell you of my wish to see you take part in some of next year's performances of my *Parsifal*. The excellence of the tenor, Gudehus, has already decided me to recommend that you two should sing in *Tristan and Isolde* in Dresden; I can be sure that the other rôles will be equally well cast. I should also be very well satisfied if you would give *Isolde* in London, where I know you have an engagement. It is understood that in expressing my wishes to you my other relations with the general management of the Dresden Court Theatre are not in any way affected. In making over *Tristan and Isolde*, I attach no other conditions than those which the general management's sense of what is fit will be inclined to accept. * * *

728. TO ALBERT NIEMANN, BERLIN

PALERMO, 16th December, 1881.

* * * *—Your *Tristan* is and remains a miracle! Those who refuse to believe in it cannot go very far. I have been apprised pretty thoroughly, and never in any but a friendly spirit, of your repeated efforts on behalf of that most eccentric of my works. I could scarcely repress a sympathetic smile at such a determined

¹ *An seine Künstler*, p. 333.

effort to swim against the stream! Now, however, I laugh aloud at its success—it is against the stars in their courses! But it all sits very well on you! It was bound to be so!

I ought to have made *Tristan* at least humanly possible for a theatre evening, etc., only I never found time to do it. As it is, far too much is expected and in every respect the impossible is aimed at.

But now to my score, [*Parsifal*]¹—the last I shall ever handle! The pianoforte arrangement will certainly soon be ready. I will send it to you then. Have a look at the gentleman² and tell me what you feel about him!³

729. TO RUBINSTEIN³ (THE FATHER)⁴

PALERMO, 22nd December, 1881.

* * Perhaps you will permit me to write once more briefly about your son, Herr Joseph, and to explain what would, in my opinion, be the best attitude for you to adopt towards the young man.

Well as I can understand your fatherly anxiety about the career which your son has entered upon (a career easily open to misconception), in my opinion it only needs a little strength of mind to throw off that anxiety once for all, and with it all your fears for your son.

Joseph's efforts to comply with your desire that he should employ his talent in attaining a materially good position in life were certainly honest, but just as certainly were they rendered void by his temperament. One reason for this is doubtless to be found in certain morbid tendencies which might, I am convinced, lead to the most regrettable excesses if he were forced to continue those efforts. A perception of the nature and of the value of true art has in him grown to be a matter of actual religious faith, rooted in the most passionate sensibilities of his soul. If you would allow him, freely and securely, the modest means for an exceptionally sober and frugal way of life, you would keep him happy in the service of a noble ideal to which few, unfortunately, are able to devote themselves freely and unconstrainedly. And here I venture to ask again, what nobler use could be made of ample even if hard-earned wealth than to provide a man, a son, with true freedom at a time when his exceptional gifts need to be developed and fostered? If, for instance, the King of Bavaria had not given *me* similar freedom in season, I had long since departed from this world in silence, for

¹ The "Mosjch" (m'sieu); that is the score or rôle. (TRANS.)

² Niemann never undertook *Parsifal*.

³ Christian name and place of residence (Russia) unknown.

⁴ *An seine Künstler*, p. 335.

my art would have become abhorrent to me if I had had to turn it into money. I am bringing up my own son, so that should he decide to devote himself to any form of art, he may be able to serve the world as an independent man on the modest means which I hope to leave him.

Should certain temperamental dispositions prevent your son from himself attaining the highest ends, he may yet, as a free man, do them most valuable service. Not all men are capable of everything! But one thing is certain—that to drive and compel him to accept an alien vocation must make him thoroughly unhappy.

Forgive * * these outpourings which I have felt urged to inflict on you solely by my perception of the silent conflict proceeding in your son, who has become dear to me. * * *

730. TO FRITZ BRANDT, LEIPZIG ¹

PALERMO, 14th January, 1882.

* * * I have been unable to write to you till to-day. I was compelled to postpone this sorrowful duty, as my state of health is such that my dear wife hesitated at the time to tell me anything of the terribly sudden death of your dear father. Chance informed me of the fatal event!

You will no doubt understand me and forgive me if I cannot put my feelings about it into words. I am myself in the third period of man's life and have already seen the passing of two generations. In your father I have lost the last representative of that second generation which still linked me with the past. In you I hail the third generation whom I trust to carry on the work of my maturity. Welcome to you! I take it that you are willing to continue your father's last work in collaboration with me.

In any event all the means to do so are at your disposal, and you know exactly what the staging of *Parsifal* involves.

Allow me therefore to appoint you to your deceased father's post in my Bayreuth production.² * * * *

731. TO ANGELO NEUMANN, LEIPZIG

PALERMO, 16th January, 1882.

* * I thought it very friendly of you to let me know of the success of the *Tristan* performance at your theatre—only what could I say in reply? Did you put any question to me? The question which I, on the other hand, put to myself remained unspoken because I am

¹ *Bayreuther Briefe*, p. 305.

² Fritz Brandt, who was already a loyal assistant to Angelo Neumann, accepted the appointment.

myself still at a loss for the answer! You know that I did not want to permit this problematic work to be performed except when I could assist personally. Now it has succeeded without that—and I am astonished! Well, good luck! I certainly perceive hidden qualities in Seidl, which only need encouragement to amaze even me. And so, may I ask you for the sake of *everything*, to give him a freer hand even in scenic arrangements than is usually accorded to kapellmeisters, for this is the very point on which he has learnt most from me! * * * *

As regards Paris, I should certainly prefer you to give up the project entirely, and really, I can hardly understand how I persuaded myself to do what you wanted for Paris. If you had not already spent money on the business, or if I knew how you could make good the money laid out for Paris in any other way, I would seriously endeavour to annul our contract, at the same time informing the *Commission d'auteurs dramatiques* (of whom I am an associate) that I once for all refuse my consent to the theatrical production of any one of my works there in whatever language. You are, after all, too young and inexperienced as yet to understand clearly the implications of my attitude to this arrogant centre of culture—Paris. It simply revolts me to have anything to do with it! I fear that disagreeable experiences¹ will some day make you feel as I do. * * * *

732. TO HANS VON WOLZOGEN, BAYREUTH²

PALERMO, 23rd February, 1882.

* * In reading through the "Cherubini"³ the following superficial ideas occurred to me, which I am not much inclined to recommend for further working out. Thus:

(1) Tragedy of Rossini, who could invent new melodies, but could carry through no sustained and orderly work.

(2) Tragedy of Schumann, who never achieved any melodies at all.

(3) Tragedy of Brahms, who—despite great fullness—is always tedious.

The tragedy of Mendelssohn, who could never find a really German operatic libretto, has already been treated by C. Devrient.—There are also various other tragedies.—* * *

¹ Angelo Neumann gave up the idea of taking his Wagner company to Paris. See No. 733.

² *An seine Künstler*, p. 400.

³ This was an article on Cherubini (*Bayreuther Blätter*, 1882) by Ludwig Schemanns who at a great age saw his comprehensive book on Cherubini published in 1925, after forty years' work upon it.

733. TO ANGELO NEUMANN, LEIPZIG

PALERMO, 26th February, 1882.

* * I cannot understand why I should be perpetually bombarded with questions which would have been answered and settled long ago if you had made proper use of the letter of introduction I gave you to Charles Truinet¹ (Nuitter). This friend has long been my agent in Paris. He knows all, my position and my rights, of which *none* have been relinquished. Some time ago he had to conduct the *Lohengrin* transactions commissioned by the then director of the Grand Opera, Perrin, and thereby found that I had a right to *refuse* my permission; just as formerly with Padeloup, to whom I gave the right to perform *Rienzi*.—Why then these everlasting lawyer-like obscurities??

At this point let me tell you that I have decided *never*—while the copyright is mine—to allow one of my operas to be performed in Paris, and I propose to use the concession made to you—while it lasts—simply as a means of forestalling other attempts at production. You yourself will no doubt decide ultimately that you must let Paris slide. I wish you would do it now and simply return me our contract. I know Paris and I feel it is against my honour to appear to set any store by Parisian successes. You can no doubt use the *Lohengrin* effects elsewhere.—

The *Nibelungen Ring* must certainly be translated by Forman, not by Corder! I have weighty reasons!—* * * *

734. TO HERMANN LEVI, MUNICH²

BAYREUTH, 20th May, 1882.

* * I learn that Herr Vogl has drawn your attention to certain difficulties which will arise in regard to the proposed performances of *Parsifal* in Bayreuth if I do not very definitely give himself and his wife first place in the company. This decides me to ask you to convey the following in my name to these excellent artistes. Herr Vogl himself knows that, slowly but ultimately very definitely, I came to recognise his great merits. If I am to allot the primacy among five singers I would cordially grant it to him. As regards Frau Vogl, much as she has moved me in the various rôles in which I have heard her, I felt it best not to offer her the part of Kundry, as I need for this part a vocal vigour which I felt I could not expect from this singer. Accordingly I originally allotted the part to be sung alternately by Frau Materna and Fräulein Brandt, and it was only when I thought I saw that Herr Vogl might feel concerned in the arrangement that I left it to his own judgment, after experience

¹ Neumann printed it "Trucket."² *An seine Künstler*, p. 345.

of the matter, to give his wife a share in this rôle. As a manifesto of mine will have informed Herr Vogl that I propose to draw on a supply of talented singers to study for the numerous performances of *Parsifal*, he will, once he enters into my idea, not feel offended if he sees Herr Gudehus and Herr Jaeger take the part of Parsifal in a few performances in addition to Herr Winkelmann, who is appointed to alternate with him. In the same way Fräulein Malten will sing Kundry a few times, and I should feel well satisfied if Frau Vogl would take part in several of the very numerous performances. I may say that Frau Materna believed she was in actual possession of the part as my first invitation was to her, and now makes it a condition of her co-operation that she should sing it at the first performance, while Fräulein Brandt, who has already studied Kundry with me for seven months to my very great satisfaction, will, I understand, modestly renounce the privilege.

Foreseeing these few difficulties, I still believed we could wait to settle them till we were all met together, but Herr Vogl's declaration to you shows me that I must take my decision betimes, and I will inform you of it as follows: I am ready if necessary to cut down the number of performances advertised ¹ so drastically as to be able to manage with one single personnel, so long as that personnel is thoroughly friendly and willing to enter into my ideas; in that case I should have to be willing to put up with the secession of such artistes as were unable to maintain this concord with me.

Consequently I have to ask you, my dear friend, to acquaint Herr Vogl in my name with what I have said here, at the same time requesting him to let you know as soon as possible whether I am to make the suggested alterations in the advertisements of our Dramatic Festival or not. * * *

735. TO FRIEDRICH SCHÖN, WORMS ²

BAYREUTH, 28th May, 1882.

* * * * The regular performances of *Parsifal* in Bayreuth serve me as a school for the artistes taking part, and, as we cannot manage otherwise, these performances will have to be reserved for the paying public. The association of patrons, as it has existed hitherto, must be regarded as as good as dissolved. It would be very much to my mind, nevertheless, if you * * (in Worms, let us say) could call into being a foundation, with the help of those you think most suitable, to make it possible for the impecunious to attend the performances. This foundation, under your direction, would have

¹ The performances remained as advertised, i.e. sixteen in number, and the Vogls withdrew.

² *An Freunde*, p. 597.

to be entirely independent of the management of the performances. It might further devolve on the foundation to support and promote the new *Bayreuther Blätter*. By this method, which seems to me to be the simplest, abundant moral and intellectual work might be effected. * * *

736. TO ANGELO NEUMANN, STAYING IN BREMEN

VENICE, 29th September, 1882.

* * * * I set most store by Berlin. There you could certainly hold a complete winter season successfully; only then it would be necessary to expend the utmost care upon the accuracy and excellence, the type and style, of the performances. * * *

As far as I understand, you already have one of the Berlin theatres in view. The architect Brückwald also told me that you had got him to work out the plans for a real Wagner theatre for Berlin, faithful to the Bayreuth model, and I was able to give my willing assent to the good idea of inserting a second row of boxes into the so-called Fürstengalerie,¹ and of making it possible to charge two prices in the pit by slightly raising half the seats.

I am ready to support you in this undertaking in every respect—you know that. Only I do not know how to reply to the request you have recently put to me again to be allowed to advertise the performance of *Parsifal* at this theatre, after I have already given you my most definite answer on that point. *Parsifal* must belong exclusively to my own Bayreuth creation, and my Dramatic Festival Theatre there will be used exclusively for producing this one work for a given season year after year. This isolation is demanded by the whole conception of the subject. My Bayreuth creation stands and falls with *Parsifal*. It will pass away, indeed, at my death, for I know of no one, and *can* know of no one, to keep it going on my lines. If my strength (which on these occasions is put to a severe test) fail greatly before my death, so that I am unable to take part in the performances, I shall certainly have to consider means of preserving my work pure *as far as possible* for the world. If by then you have attained, and maintained, the right standing for your Wagner theatre by the exclusive and ever-improving production of all my earlier works, Sacred Dramatic Festivals might well be entrusted to it at certain special seasons, and to it alone. On this understanding only could I surrender my *Parsifal*.—You might very well discuss this confidentially, on the basis of what I have told you to-day, with persons whose help you need to found your theatre. But you would force me to take back all I have said if a

¹ "Princes' circle." (TRANS.)

word of this business were made public. You know in what a base, malicious way our journalists get hold of such news, and you cannot expect me to throw my Bayreuth creation, attained through such inexpressible effort, to be vulgarly mauled.—* * * *

737. TO LUDWIG VON BÜRKELE, MUNICH ¹

[VENICE], 1st October, 1882.

* * I am in an uneasy and anxious frame of mind! The absence of my illustrious Benefactor from the *Parsifal* performances (unhappily I must understand that it was not voluntary!), and the prospect of a separate performance under conditions which I regard as utterly unfavourable, disturb me to the very soul. It is impossible on these lines for my most exalted Patron to receive that impression of my work which I believed I had prepared for him in the Bayreuth performances. Should our most gracious Master be satisfied, however, all my interest in reviving and perpetuating *Parsifal* even in Bayreuth may well perish. Why all this trouble, if all can be done so easily *privatim* and without me?—

In your last friendly letter to my wife you let us see that you cherished a hope that you might perhaps receive His Majesty's command to visit Venice. How we wish that this hope may be fulfilled! Perhaps I might be accorded most gracious communications which would greatly ease my mind. I do not see how I could continue the Dramatic Festival without great risk unless, for another two years, I can rely on the generous support of my exalted Protector by the loan of the royal orchestra and choir without charge. I understand, however, the great sacrifice thereby made on behalf of my enterprise, and—how can I accept this sacrifice with any cheerfulness if I cannot give my most exalted Benefactor even a little pleasure by means of it?—* * *

738. TO ANTON SEIDL, LEIPZIG ²

VENICE, 2nd December, 1882.

Bravo, dear Seidl! Don't on any account relinquish your leave! Then come as fast as possible to me, where you can cease your travels and live with us. I want your help again. On December 25th I want to have played to my wife my *Symphony*, which will then be just fifty years old. They have promised to get together a passable orchestra of the scholars at the local Conservatorium. You will have to rehearse them. Also a few adaptations will be necessary. Well, then—to it!—* * *

¹ *An Freunde*, p. 599.

² *An seine Künstler*, p. 363.

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

IV. FROM THE DEPARTURE FROM ZURICH TO THE RESCUE BY KING LUDWIG II. OF BAVARIA, 1858-1864

1858. 29 Aug. Wagner arrives in Venice.
 1859. 28 March. Arrives in Lucerne to compose Act III. of *Tristan and Isolde*.
 15 Sept. Settles in Paris.
 1860. 25 Jan. First concert in Paris.
 1861. 13, 18, 24 Mar. Performances of *Tannhäuser* in Paris.
 12 May. Wagner hears *Lohengrin* for the first time in Vienna.
 25 Aug. The future King Ludwig II. of Bavaria hears *Lohengrin* for the first time in Munich.
 1862. 25 Jan. Completion of the poem of *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*, which Wagner reads aloud at Franz Schott's house in Mainz on 5 Feb.
 Feb. (the end). Wagner settles at Biebrich-on-Rhine.
 12 Sept. Wagner conducts *Lohengrin* in Frankfort-on-Main.
 1863. Feb. Gives up his house in Biebrich.
 Mar. & April. Conducts concerts in Moscow and St. Petersburg.
 12 May. Settles in Penzing near Vienna.
 1864. 23 March. Secret flight from Penzing.
 3 May. Wagner found in Stuttgart by King Ludwig II. of Bavaria's envoy and brought to Munich.

V. MUNICH AND TRIEBSCHEN, 1864-1872

1864. July. Hans von Bülow moves to Munich with his family.
 1865. 10 June. First performance of *Tristan and Isolde*, in Munich.
 10 Dec. Wagner leaves Munich in consequence of persecution and goes to Switzerland.

1866. 25 Jan. Wagner's wife Minna dies in Dresden.
 April. Wagner settles at Tribschen near Lucerne.
 October. Cosima von Bülow joins Wagner.
1867. 16 June. Model performance of *Lohengrin* in Munich.
 1 Aug. The Paris version of *Tannhäuser* given in Munich.
 10 Oct. Completion of the score of *The Mastersingers*.
1868. 21 June. First performance of *The Mastersingers* in Munich.
1869. 21 Jan. *The Mastersingers* in Dresden.
 6 June. Cosima von Bülow bears Wagner a son, Siegfried.
 22 Sept. First performance of *The Rhinegold*, in Munich, in Wagner's absence and against his wish.
 Sept. (end). Wagner begins the composition of *The Twilight of the Gods* (before *Siegfried* is quite finished).
1870. 1 April. First performance of *The Mastersingers* in Berlin.
 26 June. First performance of *The Valkyrie* in Munich, in Wagner's absence and against his wish.
 25 Aug. Wagner marries Cosima von Bülow in the Protestant Church at Lucerne.
1871. 5 Feb. Completion of the score of *Siegfried*.
 17 April. Journey to Bayreuth.
 14 Dec. Wagner goes again to Bayreuth to settle the Dramatic Festival Theatre project.
1872. 24 April. Wagner moves to Bayreuth (first living at a small castle near by, "Fantaisie").

VI. BAYREUTH, 1872-1883

1872. 22 May. Laying of the foundation-stone of the Dramatic Festival Theatre.
 10 Nov.- } Wagner tours through Germany looking for suitable
 14 Dec. } artistes for the performance of *The Ring*.
1873. 2 Aug. The temporary structure of the Dramatic Festival Theatre completed.
 31 Oct. The patrons of the Dramatic Festival meet in Bayreuth.
1874. May. Wagner moves into the Villa Wahnfried.
 23 Nov. Score of *The Twilight of the Gods* completed.

1875. July-Aug. Rehearsals for *The Ring* in Bayreuth.
1876. 20 March. First performance of *Tristan and Isolde* in Berlin.
- 3 June. Rehearsals for *The Ring* begun.
- 13-17, 20-23, 27-30 Aug. Performances of *The Ring*.
1877. May. Wagner gives concerts in London to cover the Bayreuth deficit but without the desired result.
- Autumn. Composition of *Parsifal* begun.
- 25 Dec. The poem of *Parsifal* published.
1878. 28. April. Angelo Neumann begins performances of *The Ring* in Leipzig.
1881. May. Four performances of *The Ring* at the Victoria Theatre, Berlin, under Angelo Neumann.
- Aug. Preliminary rehearsals for *Parsifal*.
1882. 13 Jan. The score of *Parsifal* finished in Palermo.
- 2 July. Rehearsals for *Parsifal* begun.
- 26 July. First performance of *Parsifal* (repeated fifteen times till 29 Aug.).
- 24 Dec. Wagner conducts his *Symphony in C major* composed in 1832 at the Liceo in Venice. (The last time he conducts.)
1883. 13 Feb. Death of Wagner from a heart attack at 4 o'clock in the afternoon.
- 18 Feb. Burial in Bayreuth.
- 4 Oct. *Tristan and Isolde* at last performed in Vienna.

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— Jessie, *née* Tailor; separated from her husband but without divorce and settled in Florence; in 1879, after Eugène's death, married the historian and publicist, Karl Hillebrand (1829-84), 165, 168-71, 173, 176, 177, 319, [415]

- Lehmann, Lilli, born 1848, celebrated singer for many years at the Berlin Court Opera; teacher of singing; first Rhine Daughter and Helmwige at the 1876 Dramatic Festival, 716
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- Lipinski, Karl Joseph, 1790-1861, notable violinist; from 1839 head conductor of the Dresden Court Opera, 86, 89, 121
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- Lutz, Johann, Baron von, 1826-90, Bavarian statesman; 1863-6 secretary to the Royal Cabinet; 1867-71 Minister of Justice; 1880-90 Prime Minister, 610, 622
- Lutzer, Jenny, 1816-77, a distinguished singer; in Prague 1832-7, then chiefly at Vienna; married Franz von Dingelstedt, 8
- Lux, Friedrich, 1820-95, for many years kapellmeister, and director of the choir at Mayence; a notable composer (opera *Der Schmied von Ruhla*), 242
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- Meser, C. F., music publisher at Dresden (died 1850); his successor was Hermann Müller (the business has been since 1872 in the hands of Adolf Fürstner, Berlin), 105, 139, 300, 416, 639
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- Meysenbug, Malwida von, 1816-1903; 1848 governess in Alexander Herzen's house in London; later in Paris, Florence, and from 1870 in Rome; known by her *Memories of an Idealist*, 463, 469, 483, 496, 522, 558
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- Muchanoff, Marie (*née* Countess Nesselrode), 1823-74; 1839-40 married (1) the diplomat von Kalergis (a Greek); (2) 1864 Herr von Muchanoff, 483, 486, 635, 793
- Müller, Alexander, from Erfurt; music and piano teacher in Zurich after 1822; friend of Wagner after the Wagners' activities at Würzburg, 151, 153, 154, 155, 249, 379
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- Georg, born 1840; 1868-97 a celebrated tenor at the Court Opera House, Vienna, 683
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- Wenzel, 1767-1835, prolific stage composer; among other things *The Sisters of Prague*, [44]
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- Niemann, Albert, 1831-1917, leading tenor, particularly distinguished in

- Wagnerian rôles; 1866 in Hanover; then in Berlin; Siegmund at the Dramatic Festival of 1876, 326, 330, 332, 338, 346, 389, 448, 453, 476-8, 480, 484, 659, 667, 670, 684, 694, 695, 728
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- Nohl, Ludwig, 1831-85; 1865-8 special Professor of Musical History at the University of Munich; retired; 1872 taught privately; 1880 professor at Heidelberg University; originally a lawyer; wrote on many aspects of music but without distinction, 703
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- Ollivier, Emile, born 1825, advocate; 1857 in Parliament; 1870 Prime Minister; 1870 Member of the Academy, 347, 348, 349, 500
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- Pfordten, Ludwig Karl, Baron von der, 1811-88, Dr. Jur.; 1843 professor at the University of Leipzig; 1848 Foreign Minister in Dresden; 1849-59 and 1864-6 Bavarian Prime Minister, 137, 611, 616, 622, 624
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- Pillet, Léon, 1803-68; 1840 director of the *Grand Opéra*, Paris, 48
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- Planer, Amalie, Minna's sister; alto singer; later married a Russian general, von Meck, 26, 28, 529
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- Minna. *See* Wagner
- Natalie, the illegitimate daughter of Wagner's first wife, but passed as her younger sister, born 1826; lived in Dresden in 1869 as Frau Bilz (cf.

- Wagner's letter to Hans Richter, 6 Feb.), 66, 80, 85, 111, 153, 156, 159, 302, 378, 419, 431, 435, 437
- Plutarch, *circa* A.D. 40-120, author of the famous *Lives* of Greeks and Romans, 469
- Pohl, Wagner's dog, 583
- Pohl, Richard, 1826-96, writer on music, etc., in Weimar; after 1864 in Baden-Baden, 434, 626
- Pohlentz, August, 1790-1843, organist at St. Thomas's Church, and from 1827-35 conductor of the Gewandhaus Concerts in Leipzig, 9, 17, 85
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- Heinrich, 1837-1900; known to Wagner in Vienna; from 1867 a writer on music in Munich and later choir conductor, 570, 571, 574, 575, 578, 584, 585, 588, 598, 618, 620, 626, 660, 713
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- Praeger, Ferdinand, 1815-91, composer and writer on music in London; attained notoriety through his book *Wagner as I knew Him* (German translation, 1892, withdrawn from circulation), 279, 281, 335
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- Pusinelli, Anton, died 1878, Dr. Med., physician in Dresden, 98, 122, 300, 316, 373, 376, 432, 534, 577, 606, 613
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- Raupach, Ernst, 1784-1852, an author particularly known for his plays, 3
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- Redern, Wilhelm, Count von, 1802-83; 1825 Chamberlain; 1828 Intendant of the Royal Theatre; 1830-42 General Intendant of the Court Music in Berlin; composer, 59, 65, 66, 118
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- Reissiger, Karl Gottlieb, 1798-1859, noted composer; from 1826 Court kapellmeister in Dresden, 57, 64, 66, 71, 74, 78, 84, 96, 121, 408
- Rellstab, Ludwig, 1799-1860, writer and musical critic in Berlin, 36, 39
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- Rhaden, Editha von, 1823-85, for many years lady-in-waiting to the Grand Duchess Helene of Russia, 555, 561, 564, 567
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- Riedel, Emil, 1832-1906; 1866 Bavarian Secretary of State in Munich; 1872 plenipotentiary at the Bundestag; 1877-1904 Bavarian Minister of Finance, 622
- Karl, 1827-88, founder of the Choral Society in Leipzig named after him (1854); 1866 professor; 1883 Honorary Doctor of Leipzig, 656
- Rietz, Julius, 1812-77; 1848-60 kapellmeister in Leipzig; then Court Kapellmeister in Dresden, 246, 253
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- Ringelhardt, Friedrich Sebald, 1785-1855; 1832-44 director of the Stadttheater, Leipzig, 8, 29, 39
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- Ritter, Alexander, 1833-96, son of Frau Julie; noted as the teacher of Richard Strauss; violinist, music dealer and composer
- — his wife, Francisca (married 1854), daughter of Albert Wagner, 85, 214, 227, 229
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- Julie, Frau, 1794-1869; after the death of her husband (a merchant in Narwa) moved to Dresden, 1841, 165, 169, 171, 176, 177, 178, 180, 182, 191, 193, 197, 198, 200, 201, 209, 215, 222, 233, 239, 254, 295, 319, 322, 324, 325, 333, 342, 354, 369, 377, 383, 402, 412, 424, 427
- — her daughter Emilie, 176, 239, 254, 295, 319, 342, 402
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- — her son Karl, 1830-91, poet and musician, the pupil of Hiller and Robert Schumann in Dresden, 130, 162, 165, 176-8, 185, 187, 193, 202, 213-15, 250, 266, 267, 289, 293, 295, 319, 322, 324, 325, 357, 365, 368-70, 377, 383, 386, 387, 398, 400, 402, 408, 412, 414, 427
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- Röckel, August, 1814-76; 1843-8 music director at the Dresden Court Theatre; after 1849 imprisoned for fifteen years at Waldheim in Saxony for his part in the Dresden Rising; afterwards a political journalist, 84, 106, 148, 158, 207, 225, 243, 255, 268, 291, 310, 520, 522, 525, 604
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- Rottmayer (*sic*!), Friedrich, 1800-66, actor and afterwards principal manager at the Hamburg theatre; from 1855 director of the Royal Theatre, Hanover, 346
- Rottorf, a woman servant of Wagner's, 89
- Royer, Alphonse, 1803-75, dramatic author; 1856-62 director of the Grand Opéra, Paris, 459, 460, 469, 504
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- — his father, 729
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- Samuel, Adolf, 1824-98, composer and musical theorist; 1860 professor at the Brussels Conservatoire; 1871 director of the Ghent Conservatoire, 459
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- Sax (later known by her family name, Sass), Marie, 1838-1907, a very popular dramatic singer; 1859-70 in Paris, 477, 484

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Theater, Berlin; 1851 in Wiesbaden; 1853 in Darmstadt, 40, 41, 217, 218, 220, 228, 242, 246, 249, 287, 363, 371, 527

Schindler, Anton, 1795-1864, theatre kapellmeister; lived for a number of years with Beethoven, of whom he wrote a biography, 53

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Schlesinger, Maurice, music publisher in Paris (from 1834); Brandus later took over his business, 58, 60, 65, 237

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— Johann Philippe Samuel, 1779-1853, Hofrat; critic on the *Spenerschen Zeitung*, Berlin, 81

Schmitt, Friedrich, nicknamed "Rüpel," 1812-84, tenor at the Magdeburg theatre; later a teacher of singing; summoned to Munich by Wagner; author of *Grosse Gesangsschule für Deutschland*; teacher of Julius Hey, 13, 367

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- Schopenhauer, Arthur, 1788-1860, the philosopher, 269, 271, 310, 383, 439, 471
- Schott, music publishers, B. Schott and Sons, Mainz: Andreas Schott (1781-1840), Johann Josef Schott (1782-1855), Franz Schott (1811-74); business managers, A. L. Mazière (from 1874), Dr. Ludwig Strecker (from 1875), 1, 449, 450, 452, 454, 457, 461, 462, 468, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 515, 516, 519, 522, 535, 536, 538, 539, 542, 550, 551, 560, 569, 570, 576, 596, 599, 601, 603, 619, 621, 623, 625, 629, 631, 632, 638, 639, 642, 644, 646, 650, 661, 663, 664, 673, 675, 686, 688, 693, 698, 707, 725
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- Franz. *See* Schott, music publishers
- Schreiber, tenor in Magdeburg, 26, 28, 29
- Schröder-Devrient, Wilhelmine, 1804-60, the famous operatic singer; first married to the actor Karl Devrient, 6, 8, 26, 49, 54, 60, 64, 74, 75, 79, 80, 83, 86, 91
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- Maria, his wife, *née* Reichsgräfin von Nesselrode, 483
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- Seidl, Anton, 1850-98, the distinguished conductor; from 1875 with Angelo Neumann; from 1885 in New York; 1886 in Bayreuth, 675, 706, 712, 715, 717, 731, 738
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- Spontini, Gasparo, 1774-1851, the composer, 37, 126
- Spyri, Johann Bernhard, 1821-84, editor of *Eidgenössische Zeitung*; lawyer and, from 1868, Town Clerk in Zurich; in 1852 married Johanna, *née* Heusser, known as an authoress, 167, 284
- Stahl, von, lady-in-waiting to the Grand Duchess Helene of Russia, 555
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- Stegmayer, Ferdinand, 1803-63, kapellmeister of the Leipzig theatre; later teacher of singing in Vienna, 7, 19
- — his father, author of the farce, *Rochus Pumpernickel*, [44]
- Stehle, Sophie, 1842 (1838?) - 1921; 1860-74 operatic singer in Munich; married Baron Wilhelm von Knigge, at Castle Harterode near Hanover, 600
- Stern, Julius, 1820-83, violinist; in 1847 founded the choral society named after him, and in 1850 the conservatoire named after him in Berlin, which still exists, 653, 656
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- Street, Agnes, daughter of the diplomat Klindworth; pianist, a pupil of Liszt's and recipient of his *Letters to a Friend* (edited by La Mara, vol. iii. of the *Letters*), 459, 476, 518
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- Szemere, a wealthy Hungarian lady living in Paris who helped Wagner extensively; known to have been in Rome in 1871, 463, 469
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- Tedesco, Fortunata, born 1826, operatic singer; 1851-7 and 1860-2 at the Grand Opéra, Paris; later in Lisbon and Madrid; nothing is known of her after 1866, 477, 484
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- Tieck, Ludwig, 1773-1853, the romantic poet; reader to King Friedrich Wilhelm IV. at Potsdam; previously, 1819-41, wrote plays in Dresden, 132, 133
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- Timoleon, died 337 B.C., Corinthian general, 469
- Todt, Karl Gotthelf, 1809-52, Saxon politician; 1849 fled to Switzerland, 149
- "Toni," an actress in Rudolstadt, 9
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- Triebtschen, near Lucerne; Wagner lived here from April 1866 till he settled in Bayreuth in 1872, though he often heads his letters merely "Lucerne," 617-46, 648-56
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- Tuczek, Leopoldine, 1824-83; 1841-61 a very popular singer at the Berlin Court Opera, 119, 394
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- Uhlig, Theodore, 1822-53 (died 3 Jan.), chamber musician in Dresden, 158, 160, 165, 166, 167, 172, 206, 208, 219, 226, 230, 235-7, 239, 298, 714
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- Viardot-Garcia, Pauline, 1821-1910, the famous singer and teacher of singing, 47, 483
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— Theresa, *née* Thoma, his wife, 1845-1921, an excellent operatic singer, 679, 684, 724, 734

Wagner, Adolf, 1774-1835, a scholar living privately in Leipzig, uncle of Wagner, [13]

— Albert, 1799-1874, Wagner's brother; tenor; later operatic producer, 5, 6, 7, 60, 69, 78, 85, 91, 108, 115, 214, 229, 230, 641

— — his wife, 69, 214

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— Francisca, daughter of Albert, married 1854. *See* Ritter

— Johanna, *née* Pätz or Beetz, Wagner's mother, 1778-1848 (died 9 Jan. in Leipzig); made a second marriage with Ludwig Geyer, 1814, 3, 4, 6, 8, 21, 22, 37, 60, 69, 185, 641

— Johanna, daughter of Albert. *See* Jachmann-Wagner

— Julius, 1804-62, Wagner's brother, goldsmith, 42, 526

— Louisa. *See* Brockhaus

— Minna, *née* Planer, Wagner's first wife, 1809-66 (died 24 Jan. in Dresden); married 24 Nov. 1836 in Königsberg, 16, 18, 19, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 36, 38, 40, 41, 45, 49, 64, 65, 69, 71, 72, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 100, 102, 107, 110, 115, 118, 131, 132, 133, 143, 144, 147, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160-2, 168, 169, 170, 173, 175, 177, 178, 180, 195, 197, 200, 239, 252, 254, 265, 266, 268, 279, 280, 284, 285, 286, 301, 302, 351, 352, 353, 354, 356, 357, 358, 361, 362, 363,

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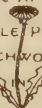
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